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The nature and influence of constructs of the employing relationship in a general hospital as revealed by a study of participation.

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THE NATURE AND INFLUENCE OF CONSTRUCTS OF THE EMPLOYING RELATIONSHIP IN A GENERAL HOSPITAL AS REVEALED BY A STUDY OF PARTICIPATION

submitted by I. P. Campbell
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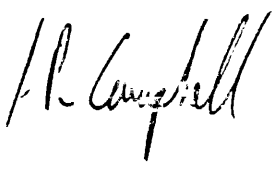

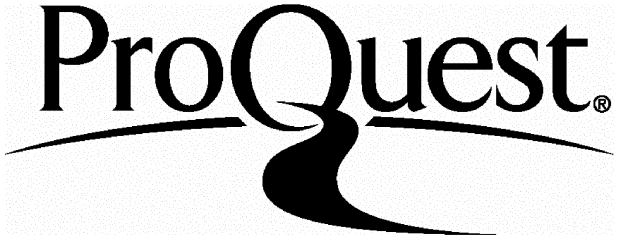

Summary

The enquiry described in thesis arose because of the difficulties being experienced by a manager in a hospital who was attempting to relate orthodox management teaching, largely based on neo-human relations theory, to the process of achieving change with staff while maintaining, and hopefully enhancing, the industrial relations climate. Such theory implies that the introduction or extension of participation may help to achieve such goals. The study examined whether this was the case or whether it might increase the range of issues potentially available for negotiation and generate further conflict.

Assumptions about the nature of the employing relationship are made explicit and an affinity identified with an interactionist perspective and, more specifically, with negotiated order theory. Conceptual understandings are similarly clarified and the significance of the exercise of authority, as well as power, is emphasised.

The research design involved qualitative research by an internal researcher i.e. someone who was an established element of the context under investigation. There was thus a degree of action research.

Data is presented from interviews with staff representatives, from records of day-to-day industrial relations interaction, and from other commentators and research. It describes and analyses perceptions of the management function and the methods already used by the representatives to exercise influence over it. Attitudes to the various forms and processes of participation are considered and the potential for participation examined by assessing areas of interest and the

inclination and ability of both staff and their representatives.

Confirmation is obtained that the study of participation cannot be isolated from the other characteristics of the employing relationship and it is also demonstrated that the nature of the constructs of the employing relationship can be revealed by such a study. An analytic framework is derived from the data that relates the potential for participation to these constructs.

I.P. Campbell
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CONTENTS

Abbreviations

ACAS	Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service
AHA	Area Health Authority
BIM	British Institute of Management
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
EEF	Engineering Employers' Federation
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
GMBATU	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
GNP	Gross National Product
IHSA	Institute of Health Service Administrators (now Institute of Health Services Management)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPM	Institute of Personnel Management
IR	Industrial Relations
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
MLSO	Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer
NALGO	National And Local Government Officers' Association
NHS	National Health Service
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
ODA	Operating Department Assistant
Rcn	Royal College of Nursing
SDP	Social Democratic Party
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress

Chapter One

THE RESEARCH STIMULUS

As one would expect, I have entitled this thesis 'The nature and influence of constructs of the employing relationship in a general hospital revealed by a study of participation' in the hope that this phrase will concisely, if only approximately, describe the subject matter of the research from which the thesis derives. But one might be forgiven for suspecting that the two elements of the study were almost dichotomous or that the more empirical enquiry had been deliberately manipulated in order to provide insights into a more general, conceptual framework of industrial relations behaviour. In this introduction, I can only contend that such suspicions are unfounded; the remainder of the thesis, particularly those chapters concerned with the development of the research design and subjects of enquiry, will, I trust, prove this contention to be true. The original research intent was to investigate the practical consequences of implementing participation, and was not particularly concerned with locating this activity within a wider or more theoretical framework, but as the literature review and field activity proceeded, it became obvious that little of value could be discovered about participation without simultaneous regard for other features of industrial relations character and activity. Reciprocally, pursuit of the empirical research into participation inevitably revealed more about the nature of the components of industrial relations behaviour and their inter-relation and inter-action, and as the research progressed the inevitability of the mutual relevance was strengthened.

The original outline research design could almost be said to describe a problem-solving exercise and although it was subsequently gradually but substantially revised, the intention has remained that the outcome of the research should be of practical value. The commitment to this objective arose from the personal experience which initiated the desire to research into the practical implications of participation.

Management Education

Hospital administrators often have direct managerial authority for large numbers of staff, and yet in the early years of my career in hospital administration I had virtually no guidance about how to discharge this responsibility other than from material contained in the syllabuses of the qualifying examinations of two professional bodies. I studied for the examinations of the Institute of Health Service Administrators and Institute of Personnel Management from the material supplied in, and recommended by, two correspondence courses provided by different organisations. However, I found it impossible to achieve a satisfactory synthesis of the content of these courses with the problems of staff management that I was seeking to avoid or resolve, and this has not been a problem peculiar to myself.

Steven Barker joined Pilkingtons as a graduate management trainee in 1980 and studied for Stage I of the I.P.M. examination by attending evening classes twice a week. In his assessment of the course (1983) he wrote, "Much of the material seemed irrelevant to the work I was doing - salivating dogs, standard deviation and self-actualisation did little to help me with the problems of a busy personnel department.".

Barker clearly expected his management training to be prescriptive, but states, "I felt that it had done little to help me towards 'professional competence'". That this is a deficiency of a wider part of the spectrum of management training is indicated by Wills (1983:25), who resigned as Professor of Customer Policy at the Cranfield School of Management to establish a new, private management school. Writing as the Principal Designate of the new school, the University of Management Centre, Buckingham, Wills explained why he felt there was a need for another centre of management education:

> "Instead of aiming resolutely to make managers more effective, we have tended complacently to assume that our business is to go on making the product we have always made, especially classroom-based degree courses. We have done so regardless of steadily mounting evidence over the years that neither the graduates themselves, nor their employers, have been impressed by the contribution such studies have made to workplace performance.".

When I studied for the I.H.S.A. and I.P.M. examinations, the syllabuses largely consisted of elements of traditional academic disciplines, such as economics, psychology, sociology and statistics, and a minor proportion consisted of more applied subjects, such as general management and industrial relations. As a hospital administrator, one of my central concerns was to maintain good industrial relations, as an end in itself, but at the same time to achieve managerial objectives affecting, or requiring the co-operation of, other staff, with the minimum of disruption to the industrial relations climate. Even the I.P.M. industrial relations syllabus material was of little value as a source of practical guidance. The correspondence course (NALGO 1978 : (i)) summarised it thus:

"1. SYLLABUS

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they have acquired a knowledge of:

(a) The purposes, structures, composition and activities of:

(i) worker organisations, including trade unions and professional associations;

(ii) employers and employers' associations and federations;

(iii) departments of State and Statutory bodies having an involvement in industrial relations affairs;

(b) (i) the institutions, procedures and methods of collective bargaining between employers and employees;

(ii) the nature and form of third party interventions in the process; and

(iii) the consequences of these activities.

Candidates will be expected to be able to conceptualise and analyse industrial relations situations and processes with a sufficient degree of rigour as to produce a convincing explanation.".

The emphasis of the course content appeared to be on the formal, ideological, general, and, essentially, structural and yet the concluding sentence indicates that it should be applicable to "industrial relations situations", implying all, or the majority of all, industrial relation situations, and "processes". This sentence also implicitly declares the exclusion of practical competence as an objective of the syllabus. It is only seeking to achieve "a convincing explanation" and is not concerned with the student as a participant in "industrial relations situations".

Consequently, the course did not provide the means for the student to appreciate, assess and justify their assessment of the

structures, processes and other participants in industrial relations activity in which he/she may be involved and neither did it enable the student to examine his/her own function in that activity. This second exercise would provide explicit identification of managerial objectives, cultures and ideologies; establish personal criteria of managerial effectiveness; promote the formulation or choice of an industrial relations philosophy or strategy; and confront the student with the operational industrial relations problems or inconsistencies arising from these characteristics or choices. These are all issues which I was trying to resolve during my formal management education, or had to resolve relatively shortly after its completion, but the I.P.M. industrial relations syllabus seemed to offer little assistance.

A Workplace Industrial Relations Problem

Compare, for example, the content of the syllabus with some of the issues which may arise from just one problem that may be experienced during a common industrial relations exercise - the formal negotiations between management and trade union representatives of the introduction or review of an incentive bonus scheme. Productivity schemes have been introduced widely in workplace enterprises and although they can take an enormous variety of forms, there are a number of negotiating concerns common to the implementation of many of them. In the N.H.S., the major stimulus to introduce productivity schemes was two reports of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (1967, 1971). These stated that there was a low level of productivity among hospital ancillary staff and that in spite of a reasonable basic rate their total earnings were low in

comparison with similar staff in the private sector because of the absence of an opportunity to earn a productivity-related bonus. Essentially, N.H.S. incentive bonus schemes rely on reductions in staffing levels, while usually maintaining the quality and level of service, to finance an increase in basic pay for the remaining staff and provide the employing authority with budgetary savings. Staffing levels are usually adjusted by natural wastage, and not by redundancy, dismissal or compulsory transfer.

Imagine, therefore, that management, i.e. the local administrator, work study officers and health authority personnel officer, and staff representatives i.e. full-time trade union official and relevant shop stewards, have fairly amicably reached an agreement about which staff duties are to be included in a bonus scheme, the accuracy of the detailed analysis of workload undertaken by the work study officers, the size of the bonus to be paid, the number of staff to be allocated for relief purposes and the security of the jobs for the staff already employed. It appears that the bonus scheme negotiations have been virtually completed, and without serious disagreement, but then the full-time trade union officer makes it plain that he will only accept the scheme if the allocation of staff to cover the measured workload is increased by one.

In formulating his response to this requirement, the adminstrator may first seek to find his own explanation of this unexpected development that severely threatens the successful completion of the negotiation process. The most straightforward explanation is that the full-time officer is expressing a genuine concern of the shop stewards and/or staff that, regardless of the work study officers'

figures, the proposed staffing level will not be adequate to cover the work. But there are several other explanations. It could be that the demand arises from the nature of the relationship between the full-time officer and the shop stewards. After a relatively uneventful negotiation process the full-time officer may feel obliged to demonstrate to them the value of having him present, by deliberately creating a negotiating difficulty. Or the shop stewards themselves may feel that the full-time officer has been inadequate and conceded too easily and have therefore insisted that he seek a clear concession for them from management. Equally, the demand may have been generated by the trade union representatives' perception of management's response to the previous negotiating issues, and if it has seemed weak, sensitive or conciliatory, they may wish to exploit it and seek a further, unexpected gain. And although there may be many more explanations, it could finally be suggested that the staff side wish to obtain confirmation that all that has been agreed previously really is the limit of what is available to them, and that despite the strength of their advocacy for an extra member of staff they do not expect to be successful.

The management's response would obviously be influenced by its assessment of why the late negotiating issue has arisen but will also similarly be affected by internal conflicts of personality, department and objective. The managers may indeed wish to single-mindedly obtain the greatest tangible and quantifiable efficiency and achieve an adequate level of service at the minimum of cost and therefore refuse the request for one more member of staff. Similarly, it may be their opinion that staffing levels are ultimately solely management's responsibility and so reject a trade union attempt to diminish its

control. At the other extreme, the negotiating team may be under pressure from higher management simply to complete the negotiations or may be so anxious to maintain trade union goodwill and ensure agreement about the bonus scheme that it readily concedes the request, even if it is considered to be unnecessary. Alternatively, the management team may be influenced by a sense that it is morally right or pragmatically desirable to design the bonus scheme in some sort of context of co-determination. On the basis that both negotiating groups have an interest in implementing the bonus scheme and that managerial 'reasonableness' would be reciprocated, the managers may reconsider the staffing levels and agree with the request, or they may confirm that the previous staffing level was adequate and expect the staff side to agree when it can be shown why this decision is 'fair'. Conversely, the management team might decide that the trade union representatives are presenting a genuine concern and that it would be reasonable for it to be met. At yet another level, the managers may consider their response to the request with a more tactical emphasis on its implications for the future nature of the industrial relations climate, and in particular the way in which it contributes towards the alteration, refinement or further definition of the relationship between management and the trade unions, trade union representatives and staff.

This example may seem unduly protracted, but I have not sought to describe the complete range of negotiating options available and their origins and consequences. In fact, only a small proportion of such considerations have been presented, but it demonstrates the enormous gulf between the content of professional management education and the nature of practical managerial problems. It also indicates

that there need not be an inevitable schism between theoretical concerns and practical advice and that in the right context they are inevitably inter-related to mutual advantage. This may seem to be a statement of the obvious, but as a student of management the nature of the relationship was not clear, but tenuous and elusive.

Managerial Prescriptions

The managerial approach most readily received from the I.H.S.A. and I.P.M. learning material is an amalgam of the implications of the human relations and neo-human relations schools. At the most fundamental level of analysis, these schools postulate a unitary framework for the structure of workplace relations, a belief that all the members of a work enterprise ultimately have the same goals and the same interests; conflict is not envisaged as an intrinsic feature of industrial relations. Analogies are commonly made with the activity of a team, since it has a unity of purpose, it requires equality of effort and its members are mutually interdependent. The analogy is further pursued to explain why, just as there is always a captain, chairman or leader of a team, so there must be those in a work enterprise who exercise the function of leadership, or management. This leadership will almost certainly determine the nature of the endeavour for which the enterprise is established or maintained and those who exercise it can assume that all the other members of the enterprise will seek to maximise the mutual benefit that can be derived from achieving the purpose of the enterprise.

The manager will wish to reinforce this desire by the style of management used and the method of the organisation of the work. The

inference from the neo-human relations writers has been that managers should pursue McGregor's Theory Y philosophy of the nature of working man and should therefore organise work in a way which provides the maximum opportunity for staff to achieve self-actualisation. They should exercise leadership in a manner which seeks to achieve the highest quality of human relations, or, to use the various labels, imitates Lippitt and White's 'democratic' style, is located at the democratic, relationship-orientated end of Tannenbaum's continuum, achieves Blake and Mouton's 9:9 management, and produces Likert's participative workplace system. The suggestion is that there is no intrinsic conflict between the interests of staff and management, that those who work are adult, mature people who wish to be able to exercise some degree of freedom and responsibility and gain satisfaction from it, and that if the managerial style provides an opportunity to do this, the workers will act responsibly, be more productive and share the goals established by the leadership.

This approach emphasises the value of effective, regular two-way communication between management and staff. In particular it requires management to keep them fully informed about the organisation's activities, to encourage them to express their opinions about the information received and, in addition to giving each worker the greatest possible control over the performance of their own duties, to allow the staff involvement in the organisation's decision-making system. This decision-making involvement and flow of information may be justified on moral grounds and may be envisaged as an important means of increasing the exercise of individual responsibility and control, but it may also be seen as a method of further intensifying the identification of the staff with the interests of the

enterprise.

This compound of human relations and neo-human relations industrial relations philosophy is attractive to the student of management for several clear reasons. Perhaps most fundamentally, its concern is universal and provides an analysis which can apply to apparently all workplace situations, in a way in which material about socio-technical systems, 'complex man' and orientations to work, for example, does not. Secondly, but also crucially, it provides prescriptions for managerial behaviour which are capable of simple interpretation, confirm the validity of managerial objectives and can be readily incorporated into a feasible, practical managerial strategy. In addition, although the philosophy can be interpreted not as the outcome of objective study but as a description of one particular managerial ideology, which incorporates a means for manipulating workforces, management students can console themselves with the thought that the philosophy can be alternatively regarded as one embodying important 'liberal' moral principles. Finally, there is strong and consistent support from the management 'establishment' for what appears to be the same amalgam of human and neo-human relations philosophy, to the extent that it can be said to constitute a management orthodoxy, which provides regular reinforcement of the students' inferences from the management learning material.

In a book largely written for management practitioners, Warr and Wall (1975) devote a chapter to theories of work attitudes, under the following sub-headings: 'Scientific Man', 'The Hawthorne Studies', 'Maslow's Theory of Human Nature' (which also includes references to

Argyris, Likert and McGregor) and 'Herzberg's two-factor theory'. In the conclusion to this chapter, the authors (p.38) comment, "We have briefly described some of the more important theoretical influences on both attitude research and management practices." and that, "Following this historical summary we may now turn to look at some of the major aspects of work which influence psychological well-being.". These aspects of work are described as pay, interpersonal relations, participation, job design and work stress. In the final chapter, the two authors declare their commitment (p.165). "Stated in these general terms a value system favouring change in the direction of greater well-being is unlikely to be disputed. Granting that most readers will support the general principle, we may ask them what they are doing towards its application.".

The British Institute of Management can be even more candidly exhortational, as demonstrated in a commentry on a BIM survey about participation (1981:73,74):

> "Voluntary employee participation is mainly concerned with willingness to change both our approach and our attitudes, to share responsibilities and to pull together as a team. From this should spring benefits, acknowledged by those who contributed to BIM's survey, that will have a positive role in re-invigorating the inherent strengths of British industry.... Perhaps the most difficult benefit to quantify, but one that is nevertheless present, is on a personal level. Participation will give many people a strength and feeling of personal responsibility, accountability and commitment, and these we venture to suggest could lead in turn to a restoration of pride in the products of our industries. If employee participation is the key to unlocking our competitive spirit and to restoring pride in our achievements, and if the turning of that key demands participative efforts of all who contribute to our enterprises, we should bend every sinew to turning that key."

These sentiments are shared by the IPM (1982:9):

> "Unless British management takes a positive initiative and pursues it with conviction, Britain's industry and commercial decline relative to the rest of the world will continue. Our problems are fundamentally the need to achieve a common purpose within our companies' employee participation and involvement plans. Strategies should therefore take as their starting point a high degree of common interest and mutual interdependence

which must exist in any successful organisation.".
These are only examples of the projected management orthodoxy, but it could be detailed considerably further and it also routinely appears in the professional management press and, to a lesser extent, in the national media.

But just as the received wisdom selects human relations and neo-human relations theory from the entire body of knowledge about management, and from that theory selects themes which are mutually consistent, and prescriptive, so the student management practitioner is likely to perform a further distillation through the decisions he/she makes about how the amalgam of themes applies to their particular job and through the ways in which they attempt to act in accordance with their perception of the appropriate application. My personal interpretation was extremely simple. As a hospital administrator, my principle objective was to run a health care institution as effectively and efficiently as possible and since it is commonly recognised that the NHS always requires additional finance for direct patient care purposes I could not envisage that this would not also be a major objective of the hospital staff, although I was also aware that administrators are not popular. My task even seemed ideologically unassailable. The NHS operates on fundamental socialist principles in many respects, particularly in its methods of funding, access and accountability, and I was merely anxious to provide a service of the highest standard for present and future patients. The team analogy therefore seemed extremely appropriate. Each occupational group in the hospital would have its particular functional duties and concerns but these would be directed

towards a common purpose and the administrator would simply undertake another function, that of co-ordinator of the other functions, and in addition provide some element of leadership.

This formulation, in conjunction with other parts of the management orthodoxy, provided a clear indication of how that element of leadership should be exercised. In a service enterprise bound by nationally-determined terms and conditions of service it was virtually impossible to contemplate job redesign, or other structural alterations to work organisation, but it did appear that conflict could be avoided and a sense of common purpose enhanced by the style of inter-personal relations. If one could be seen to be sensitive to the needs of the staff, in the context of pursuing 'reasonable' managerial goals consistent with the enterprise's ultimate objectives, the mutuality of interest would be self-evident. This working rapport would be established by informal consultation, and a willingness to discuss and appreciate alternative opinions, and openness, frankness and sincerity in these exchanges. Thus in some objective manner either one would recognise the merit of an opinion presented by the staff or the staff would accord with the 'reasonableness' of the management reaction or proposal, and industrial relations harmony would be maintained.

This conclusion may, in isolation, seem immensely naive but I hope that I have demonstrated that there was some logic in its development from the body of management theory that appeared to offer the greatest practical assistance. Nevertheless, the approach was neither adequate nor successful and some of the consequences will be described in Chapter Three. It was still essential, however,

to gain an appreciation of what constituted good industrial relations and how they could be achieved and there was inevitably some reappraisal of the received wisdom. Even the inventor of the Theory Y concept, McGregor, seems to have passed through a similar period of trauma, described by Handy (1976:91):

> "Douglas McGregor, on leaving Antioch College, of which he had been president, said,
> I believed for example, that a leader could operate successfully as a kind of advisor to his organisation. I thought I could avoid being a 'boss' ... I thought that maybe I could operate so that everyone would like me - that 'good human relations' would eliminate all discord and disagreement. I couldn't have been more wrong. It took a couple of years, but I finally began to realize that a leader cannot avoid the exercise of authority any more than he can avoid the responsibility of what happens to his organisation.".

My own reaction was to seek a more precise method of validating human relations theory. I had concentrated on what seemed to be its implications for managerial 'style' but I might have either misinterpreted the theory or ineptly implemented it. A more obvious and more formal requirement of human relations theorists is that staff should be involved in the management of their organisation and in particular should contribute to the decision-making processes. In short, management should accept the responsibility to introduce participation and to ensure its success. It was the desire to ascertain whether or not this was possible, and, even if it was, whether it would influence the nature of industrial relations that stimulated the research described in this thesis.

The design of the thesis is such that it presents the impression of an academically logical, apparently chronological, development of the research, its data and interpretation. The management of the research by no means followed this sequential pattern, however, and

it has been adopted for clarity of reading, rather than accuracy of procedure. Whilst there were some fairly distinct stages in the research process, there was extensive overlap and interaction between them. This cannot be represented in the thesis design, but it provided some of the most enlightening and creative elements of the research and significantly determined the substance of the thesis.

Chapter Two

PARTICIPATION - BOUNDARIES AND BEYOND

Meanings

Schregle's (1970:121) advice about how studies of participation should commence is simple and logical. "Any discussion about 'workers participation' should be preceded by a clear definition of the terminology used.". However, this is his conclusion after briefly surveying the complexity of participative systems and theories around the world which he himself admits is incapable of comprehensive definition. Many writers have avoided the definitional difficulties and implicity assumed that their understanding of the term 'participation' will become clear in context, although this can create confusion sometimes about whether the context is only illustrating an example, or examples of types, of participation, or whether it is providing a description of the author's perception of the entire concept. Even those who have attempted to clarify their meaning of the term have met with only limited success. Perhaps in an anxious endeavour to avoid vague, superficial and unhelpful 'catch-alls', some writers have achieved a precision which is no more helpful, since it excludes activities which are included and important in other analyses of participation. Such restrictions are evident, for example, in the work of Strauss and Rosenstein (1970:198), Morley (1979:259) and Butteriss (1971:6). Another approach has been to avoid any attempt at definition, but to list, or give examples of, types of participation (e.g. Ramsay 1976a:128).

Given the range of applications of the term participation, it is hardly surprising that attempts to provide a universal definition fail. They are so all-embracing as to be too vague for practical significance, or can be shown to include activities beyond participation, or solve one semantic problem by using terms which only raise others. These characteristics are apparent, respectively, in French, Israel and As (1960:3), Globeson (1970:252) and Warr and Wall (1975:86,87).

Doubt must be cast, however, on the value of quests for linguistically precise, conceptually comprehensive formulae to define participation, for two reasons. The first is that of feasibility. In a report of an International Labour Organisation technical meeting (ILO 1969:153) to discuss the definition of participation, quoted (edited and with additional parenthesis) in a subsequent I.L.O. publication (1981:6) it was recorded that:

> "The meeting considered ... whether it was possible to arrive at an internationally agreed definition of the term 'participation', in order to elucidate what was meant by 'participation of workers in decisions within undertakings'. It was found that it was not possible to arrive at such a definition, as the term 'participation' was interpreted differently by different categories of people in different countries and at different times ... However, the expression 'participation of workers in decisions within undertakings' allowed a comparison of the influence of workers on the preparation, making and follow-up of decisions taken at the undertaking level in various matters (such as ... wages and conditions of work, ... discipline and employment, vocational training ... technological change and organisation of production as well as their social consequences, investment and planning, etc.,) [by] methods as different as joint consultation and communications, collective bargaining, representation of workers [on] managerial [bodies] and workers' self-management. ... The meeting emphasised that the expression 'participation of workers in decisions within undertakings' was distinct from and therefore wider than the concept of workers participation in management.".

This conclusion has been reproduced at length not only because it contains an authoratitive indication that is impossible to define

participation, but also because it demonstrates the semantically tortuous nature of the problem, both in its general tone and by the fineness of its final distinction. Such pursuit of definitional precision is probably subject to almost exponentially diminishing returns and one must wonder what marginal value remains to be obtained from further attention to the definition of participation, particularly since, in this instance at least, semantic exactitude appears to be inversely related to useful meaning.

The report of the I.L.O. meeting also provides an example of the second reason for doubting the value of trying to define participation, which is that it can be considered to be a fundamental conceptual misconstruction. To describe participation as a category of one particular type of activity or as a collection of categories of activity e.g. joint consultation or productivity bargaining, is to suggest a conceptual absoluteness that may not exist. Merely establishing an employer-employee relationship can be construed as entering into a participative arrangement, since it creates a mutual inter-dependence and requires reciprocal co-operation. This may not only influence and/or be manifest in any systematic, or informal, arrangements explicitly recognised as 'participation', and neither just affect the nature of the formal industrial relations in the enterprise or the systems of job regulation, but will possibly permeate every aspect of workplace activity, including the nature of the work itself.

This analysis has been partially expressed by Poole (1978:1):

> "the subordinate majority have, by consequence of their task-based expertise, acquired a measure of control over the actual performance of work and this, together with other workplace

> practices designed to extend their frontier of control over decisions at shop floor level, has guaranteed the maintenance of rudimentary expressions of participation in most industrial milieux.".

Hyman's description is more forceful (Goodrich 1975:XL):

> "The strength of spontaneous and immediate shop-floor organisation derives from the employers' dependence on workers' active co-operation, ingenuity and initiative. ... A thoroughly disaffected workforce can find a thousand ways to sabotage management's objectives; and this is all the easier the more sophisticated or the more strategic the role of the particular work group. Capitalist industry can only function because of a constant process of give-and-take at the point of production, in which the agents of management concede part of their formal prerogatives in order to gain a measure of goodwill from the workforce.".

This imbues a sense of the reality of workplace relations and organisation that is in stark contrast to the abstraction of many 'pure' definitions of participation and by not trying to conceptually isolate participation, Hyman stimulates an awareness of aspects of workplace interaction that are conventionally under-rated or ignored. He emphasises the unstructured, informal and dynamic, and introduces staff goodwill and managerial prerogatives as central issues in the discussion of participation, and together these considerations generate an authentic vitality about the nature of participation. These are the very same issues as those to which the thesis field research became drawn and hopefully its account similarly conveys the life and vibrancy of participation.

Aims and Advocates

Walker emphasises the, "importance of congruent objectives and expectations" (1974:24) but it is very difficult in much of the discussion about participation to even identify common conceptual understandings, let alone objectives and expectations. The different interested parties adopt completely different stances and it is also

interesting to note that levels of enthusiasm are enormously varied. All the major political parties support some form of participation, as does a significant body of academic commentators. Its attraction is rather more patchy amongst practising managers and there is only limited support from trade unions on a national basis for certain types of participation. Perversely, it is those who would probably be most affected by participation i.e. ordinary workers and lower and middle managers, who have not had, or made, the opportunity to articulate their opinion. Many who advocate participation do so with an objective, rational clarity that for some deliberately, and others unknowingly, camouflages a complexity of differing and conflicting meanings and interests. One of the greatest sources of confusion is that it is not clear whether participation is an end in itself or a means to achieving other objectives.

Some of the purposes of participation, such as the defence and promotion of workers' interests, internal democracy and the promotion of personal fulfilment, may be said in a very vague manner to have emanated from certain ideological/ethical/moral orientations and lend credence to the espousal of participation as an end in itself because their achievement will be automatically concomitant with the success of participation. The distinction that Chell (1983:488) has drawn is that, "Participation *per se* is only a means not an end, whereas establishing industrial democracy is an end.". In the same way, the process of introducing participation may radically alter the nature of interaction at the workplace. Fatchett (1979:245) observes that, "what is apparent so far is that whatever the purpose of participation, the need for a new relationship between worker and employer is recognised.", and more sweepingly Ramsay (1977:498) asserts that,

"the whole political-economic environment will have, after all, to be transformed if a genuine industrial democracy is to prevail.".

But such predictions must be either inaccurate or unrealistic because if they were true, and perceived to be true by workers, promoting participation would have an emotional appeal of such force that it would rank as one of the most significant political issues. Workers do not take to the streets, however, demanding greater involvement or participation, or industrial democracy, waving banners, lobbying and demonstrating that industrial power will be used to achieve it. Instead, such activity relates to issues such as unemployment, trade union rights, pay awards, industrial contraction and so on. It may be more realistic, therefore, to reappraise whether these purposes of participation are genuine goals in themselves or the overt legitimisation by interested parties of an interest in participation to be used for other purposes.

The assessment of participation as a vehicle for achieving other industrial relations objectives is even more complex. The majority of the purposes of participation cast it as a catalyst for maintaining or enhancing the performance of the enterprise, defined in managerial terms. Ramsay (1977, 1983) has highlighted the way in which this may mean that interest in participation fluctuates, reflecting the pattern of power within the industrial relations context. But although the terms are rather sweeping, such an approach to participation can be fairly accurately described as structural, correlational, prescriptive and manipulative. It suggests that the structural input, participation, will have an affect upon workers which in turn will improve organisational effectiveness. The logical inference is, then, that if these

aims are desired they can be achieved by implementing participation and if these aims are designed to meet just one sectional interest then the process becomes manipulative. But regardless of ethical and ideological considerations, such reasoning is profoundly erroneous because of the dubious strength, if there is any, of the basic correlational relationships.

S. Clegg (1983:8) believes that:

> "While not opposing the value of greater participation one can oppose the somewhat suspect grounds on which such 'needs' as 'self-actualisation' have been advanced and recognize that the interests of labour may be better served by something other than a humanistically inclined but still basically manipulative psychology. There is little real empirical support for the supposition that people have an innate need for self-actualisation. Indeed, the whole argument is highly suspect.".

In fact, there are at least two correlations involved, one that increased participation leads to increased satisfaction, and another that increased satisfaction leads to increased performance. Studies have tested this second hypothesis but Tannenbaum (1966:35,36), reports that:

> "Approximately thirty years and as many research studies later, however, psychologists must admit that the results of these studies are disappointingly tenuous. Some studies did show a positive association between the morale of workers and their level of productivity; but it is not always clear that positive attitudes *caused* the high productivity rather than vice versa. Moreover, the relationships found in many of these studies are weak, a number of the studies show no relationship at all, and a few even suggest a negative association.".

As an alternative, Tannenbaum suggests (1966:36) a more realistic and fertile perspective:

> "Although job satisfaction may sometimes be associated with high productivity, as it evidently was in the Hawthorne test room, both of these variables are likely to be part of a more complex set of relationships.".

The dilemma of the many different classifications of participation is that while they help to provide some framework by which to identify its variety of forms they also almost invariably convey a strong sense of participation as a discrete activity, isolated from other workplace and industrial relations interaction. They fail to project the reality of the context of participation, in which, for example, as Marchington (1980:11-13) illustrates, decision-making processes vary over time and with different decisions, it is not often very clear when and how a decision has taken place, and there will be widely different perceptions of what degree, range and level of participation does and should exist.

Conceptual Understandings

One of the deficiencies of previous studies of participation, particularly those that have employed attitude surveys, is that they assume a common level of conceptual ability, and, within that level, common conceptual understandings. This is clearly unrealistic and while this creates a problem that is central to the validity of attitude studies it is also likely to be encountered to some degree in any kind of research into participation. This is not only because the concept of 'participation' is so nebulous, but also because its manifestations can only be defined very imprecisely and, most fundamentally, because it interacts with concepts that are the foundations of all industrial relations analysis. Ultimately, these can be distilled into the issues of power, authority and control, with consequences for understandings of the nature of conflict. These will not be dwelt upon in detail here but an indication will be given of some of the conceptual confusions and of the emphases that will apply in this thesis.

The exercise of power is often associated with achieving a goal not consistent with the wishes of others involved, by the use of overwhelming resources or pressures to conform. As Fox (1971:37) describes:

> "sanctions are used to impose upon others norms of both substantive and procedural kinds which they do not legitimise, and since this behaviour is forced upon them without their 'consent' they are more likely to experience this pressure or coercion as power.".

Smith (1979:7) portrays this in practical terms:

> "'Power' has an objective quality to it: the employer may have the power to terminate employment by closing the plant, or the union may have power to prevent production, irrespective of whether the other recognises or accepts the facts.".

The relevance of power in workplace organisation is underestimated by Armstrong et al (1981:38) but they do remind us of one of its important features:

> "although power is clearly important in determining the outcome of any attempt to change workplace rules, it does not, by itself, determine which rule changes are in question. Power is a generalised resource and the fact that it is exercised does not determine the issues on which it is exercised. It is at this level that questions of legitimisation become important.".

A concern with legitimisation is certainly relevant to the examination of the use of power but it is misleading to suggest that it is a separate category of activity. Legitimisation involves the use of power and is a manifestation of it. Power describes the totality of means by which individuals or collectivities achieve their goals through decision-making processes or by motivating others, either with or without their willing agreement. Thus power should be no more precisely defined than as the, "capacity to influence the behaviour of other persons" (Walker 1974:13).

The relationship between power and authority is also subject to alternative interpretation. A definition from Tannenbaum (1966:4) is that, "Authority is the formal right of a person, by virtue of his position or rank in an organisation, to decide, determine, or influence what others in the organisation will do.". It is difficult to concur with Walker's (1974:13) description that authority is, "the right attached to a position in an organisation to perform certain activities, including the exercise of power", since it is more realistic to subsume the first under the latter, to regard authority as one aspect of power. This is accepted by O'Donnell, who asserts that (1952:578), "Authority is the right to command or to act. It implies the possession of the power to coerce", but he refutes ideas that authority is the manifestation of power that is tacitly tolerated and even encouraged by those over whom it is exercised. He argues that:

> "It is anarchistic to imagine that subordinates can confer authority on their superiors. This teaching is perilous because it provides a philosophical basis for the direct action of subordinates, for unilateral action, for the complete control of the enterprise by organised workers, for power without responsibility.",

and he concludes that:

> "The source of managerial authority cannot be conferred upon a manager by an employee; nor is it derived from property rights. It rests ultimately in the nature of man." (p 588).

But the compliance of those subject to authority is central to the analysis of both Fox (1971) and Hyman (1975) and they also accept the validity of the consequences identified by O'Donnell if consent is withdrawn. Authority exists because (Fox 1971:37), "subordinates legitimise the order-giving role of the superior and although sanctions are deemed necessary to deter or punish transgression, these too are legitimised.". There are numerous methods by which

this legitimacy of the exercise of power is maintained and enhanced and they are largely self-perpetuating.

> "The ability to call on certain generally accepted beliefs and values - the 'rights of management', for example, or the belief that 'there will always be masters and men' - is likewise a source of power, since it entails that certain challenges to managerial control are unlikely to occur. This indicates an important aspect of power: the ability to overcome opposition is one sign of power; but a more subtle yet perhaps even more significant form of power is the ability to preclude opposition from even arising - simply because, for example, those subject to a particular type of control do not question its legitimacy or can see no alternative." (Hyman 1975:26).

Such an analysis is intrinsically appealing but it also focusses upon the concept which is the object of power and authority, however defined and differentiated, which is control. That the possession of control is the essence of any industrial relations system is supported by Smith (1979:2), who states that to understand them, "also involves a consideration of the derivation of authority and its legitimation, of power to influence both agreements and formal and informal roles: in short, the control of work.". He explains that (p 4), "'Control' means the ability to promote one's own desired objectives, or alternatively the power to resist undesirable ones. All parties in industrial relations ... set out to exert control.". For Dimmock (1977:124) the amount of participation and the amount of control vary in direct proportion. "Participation in the Health Service, therefore, will be examined in relation to the degree of control it allows the workers to affect management decision-taking.". A formal definition is again available from Tannenbaum (1966:84):

> "Control is any process through which a person or group of persons determines (i.e. intentionally affects) what another person or group of persons will do. Essentially it means creating an intended change in the behavior of others - getting them to do something they might otherwise not have done.".

But this indicates a clarity that may be inaccurate. Goodrich (1975:18,19) warns that:

> "Control is no 'simple central objective,' no one clear-cut thing which people either know they want or know they don't want. The demand cannot be put glibly into a single phrase or a single resolution - too many diverse motives are blended and crossed into the strivings of many workers for the complicated set of things called control. The demand for control is not the unified expression of some single specific impulse. ... But instead, the elements of the demand must be hunted for in the whole jungle of the reactions of workers to the industrial situation.".

More succinctly, Marchington (1979:134) explains that:

> "control will be taken as the possible end-result of a process which involves the usage of power: in other words, power refers to the process of achieving control. Control will be used as a relative term, that is, a comparison of the degree of influence exercised by the shopfloor and management over the final outcome of any rule-making process.".

The impossibility of separating participation research from the issue of control is reiterated by Dimmock (1977:124):

> "The notion of power is fundamental to the concept of participation as it determines its nature, i.e. the degree of control that each side can exercise over the actions of the other. The work-force may only exercise control when it is aware both of the power context in which participation takes place and of its power to exercise control over management actions.".

Research into participation needs to take cognizance of these analyses because they postulate tensions within the industrial relations system from which participation cannot be immune. Industrial relations virtually becomes defined as the sum of the processes used to maintain, enhance or diminish control, in potential or actual opposition to other parties in the interaction. Thus:

> "Conflict is the motive force of an industrial relations system, all the processes of the systems being driving by the necessity of accommodating conflict. The potentially conflictual nature of an industrial relations system, and the necessity for processes inside the system to accommodate conflict, can be illustrated from several examples. For example, efforts directed towards suppressing conflict rather than managing it have generally been doomed to failure." (Faucheux and Rojot 1979:36).

Consequently, the study of participation must recognise that:

> "Institutionalization involves the setting up of organisations and procedures to handle conflict through such means as collective bargaining or codetermination. ... However, it should be stressed that such bodies do not resolve conflicts; rather they regulate it. The continued existence of these institutions implies a recognition of the continuation of conflict." (Batstone et al 1979:62).

It is proposed that in this thesis a concern with the issue of control is more appropriate than an analysis of power, since this will enable proper emphasis to be given to the concept of authority, which is commonly only fleetingly and disparagingly referred to in works that concentrate on the wider concept. It is agreed that authority only exists to the extent that a type of power is legitimised and that indeed this is how authority is defined but, to complete the circle, if it is legitimised, it does exist and becomes one of the most crucial mediating factors in industrial relations, obviating the necessity to use other forms of power. Neither is this to deny the place of conflict in the study of participation. At the simplest level, conflict exists in conjunction with authority, but at another level further enquiry is needed to investigate how authority avoids conflict and, conversely, how conflict reflects challenges to authority.

Theoretical Affinities

Hyman (1975:2) has warned that those who, "insist that they are immune from theory are simply unaware of their own preconceptions and presuppositions.". What is required is, "explicit theoretical discussion and argument which seeks to locate individual happenings in their broader context" in order to proved information and insight.

The requirement to be explicit is also expressed by Fox (1971:v):

> "Since we can scarcely think at all about a subject without some kind of framework, however crude, fragmented, and internally inconsistent, the choice is not between using a framework and not using one, but between using one that is implicit and unconsidered and one that has at least the virtue of being explicit and thus susceptible to conscious thought and challenge.".

An attempt has been made to supply a conceptual framework, but although Fox's challenge is accepted the endeavour to describe the theoretical framework was considerably more tortuous. Full licence will be made, therefore, of the generous latitude that Fox allows for in the quality of its articulation. This necessity has two sources. The first derives from the fact that as a researcher my origins were in practice rather than academic study and my awareness of my own theoretical framework was limited. Secondly, although my perceptions about participation and industrial relations generally rapidly sharpened through the course of the literature and field research, this was in conjunction with alterations in their orientation. Consequently, all I now seek to achieve is to record some of the elements of theory for which I had an affiliation and to indicate those that remained, or became, valued.

It must already be self-evident that one approach which had an almost instinctive appeal before the research began and which was sustained and strengthened until its conclusion was that the study of participation can only be achieved successfully by adopting a holistic perspective. This was inevitable because the interest in participation had been stimulated by a context of much wider industrial relations activity and the intention always was that the research outcome should relate directly to this more general context. Berg (1979) uses the same approach but balances some of its value

with its deficiencies:

> "The organisation must be treated as a whole. Although the term 'organisation' in itself implies something holistic, the research process often involves reducing organisations to structures, variables, processes, etc. I do not want to argue that this reduction is wrong (it is in fact necessary in order to handle complicated phenomena), but rather that there are alternative modes of reduction, where the holistic character of the organisation is maintained. What I am proposing is a reduction that produces a 'gestalt' , i.e. an image of what is happening in and with the organisation 'as a whole'. ... Evidently a 'gestalt' model of organisation will lack the conceptual precision and strength of models that cover only a few-defined variables. ... Another aspect of the holistic perspective is the implication that activities and events in the organisation cannot be understood and explained unless they can be related to the organisation at large." (pp 17,18).

Within this holistic orientation, there were at the beginning of the research muddled theoretical affiliations confused with guilt about what seemed to be a lack of ability to distinguish which provided the 'best fit' with reality and with a concern for how some of the affiliations would be interpreted by others in terms of a management profile. For example, when the research commenced it seemed relatively straightforward that relations between staff and management could either be described by a unitary framework or by one that was pluralist and that the research into participation would be a powerful analytic tool for establishing which was correct. From the thoughts that have emerged in Chapter One, it may be assumed that tacitly I held originally to a unitary frame, partly encouraged by management education that had emphasised human relations school theorists and partly by my own perceptions of the implications for staff-management relations in an organisation of impeccable ideological soundness. As the research progressed, the pluralist analysis seemed more and more appropriate but since, put crudely, this could be viewed as a 'them and us' attitude to industrial relations, it

carried connotations of adhering to management principles of some of the most reactionery and simplistic kind. Inevitably, it is now possible to discern with hindsight, the research finished with neither analysis being accommodated to the exclusion of the other and the nature of the balance that was perceived to exist forms an important theme throughout the thesis.

The research similarly provided a catalyst for clarifying attitudes to industrial relations analyses that differentiated between structure and process. In the beginning, there was a strong attachment to the concept that industrial relations could only be understood in terms of processes and that attempts to provide insight in structural terms were suggestive of rigidity in time and place, conceptual simplicity and an insensitivity to the subjective. There has since been a realisation that this criticism was misplaced and that embracing the study of industrial relations entirely by its processes as the only way to obtain realism was in fact a reaction not against structural analyses but institutional analyses. A new understanding of structural analysis was reached with the recognition that patterns of industrial relations organisation, activity and themes could indeed be identified and that, taking the analysis one stage further, these patterns were not merely descriptive summations but themselves powerful forces shaping the nature of industrial relations. This is not to suggest that the abandonment to process analysis was unconstructive and on the contrary it is hoped that it has introduced a freshness, coupled undoubtedly with some naivity, into the structural analysis.

These developments in theoretical appreciation were partly instigated by the data from the fieldwork but they also owe a lot to the discovery of interactionists' frames of reference and of negotiated order theory, with which theoretical allegiance currently resides. The work of Blumer (1965), Goffman (1970), Mangham (1978) and Strauss (1978) and elaborations by Meltzer et al (1975) and Lauer and Handel (1977) have supplied an analysis of human behaviour that can relate to the most general, to any manifestation of social interaction, and yet conveys a real sensitivity to the minutiae of day-to-day interpersonal relationships.

There are subtle differences between symbolic, social and strategic interaction. The latter is defined by Goffman (1970:100,101):

> "Two or more parties must find themselves in a well-structured situation of mutual impingement where each party must make a move and where every possible move carries fateful implications for all of the parties. In this situation, each player must influence his own decision by his knowing that the other players are likely to try to dope out his decision in advance, and may even appreciate that he knows that this is likely. Courses of action or moves will then be made in the light of one's thoughts about the other's thoughts about oneself. An exchange of moves made on the basis of this kind of orientation to self and others can be called strategic interaction.".

The same term is used by Mangham to describe interaction when it is undertaken consciously, where:

> "interaction, the basis of social life, consists in the act of forging temporary working agreements with other actors as to the nature of the situation and the appropriateness of the various performances open to them.".

Symbolic interaction, the term used by Blumer, involves:

> "*interpretation*, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition*, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act. Human association consists of a process of such interpretation and definition. Through this process the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so." (1965:537,538).

Mangham's strategic interaction is in fact only one of three different types of behaviour which he regards as contributing towards social interaction. The strategic has already been noted to be defined by conscious awareness, in which, "The performance has an element of planning and even of manipulation but is not found in either situational scripts or personal scripts." (pp 35,36). His description of personal scripts (p 35) is that they, "consist of performances which lead to satisfaction on the part of the main actor; the actor may not be conscious of his personal script, but it is nearly always something he has sought to act out repeatedly.". Situational scripts are the routines by which much of everyday, probably unappreciated interaction proceeds and which may be defined as, "relatively predetermined and stereotyped sequences of action which are called into play by particular and well-recognised cues or circumstances, of which we acquire knowledge through the processes of socialisation." (p 33).

Whether one chooses to focus upon interaction as the mutual delivery of, and response to, cues or the more secure activity of adopting scripts, one of the major goals of the processes is the same, namely that through it the individuals interacting know that there is tacit agreement about the nature of their interaction, or the definition of the situation. The definition of the situation is one of the most important parts of all interaction. "For if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." (Thomas 1923).

The force of the definition is so strong that, "In fact, the situation may even be wrongly defined in terms of an objective appraisal, but the consequences will be real nonetheless." (Lauer and Handel 1977:86).

The force of the consequences of having a situational definition accepted by others means that obtaining and maintaining definitions advantageous to oneself becomes a crucial method of obtaining control.

> "This control is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation which the others care to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan." (Goffman 1959 quoted in Mangham 1978:23).

What this means is that if a person or collectivity can get its definition tolerated or agreed all their actions that are consistent with it are accepted as legitimate, or as if the definition was not a subjective construct but objective reality.

There are of course criticisms of the interactionist perspective and of these Meltzer et al (1975:120) assess that, "two stand forth as the most crucial: (1) limited consideration of human emotions, and (2) unconcern with social structure.". The relationship between interaction and structure does display some weakness but it is certainly not denied. Blumer declares that to reject the existence of structures in human society (1965:543), "would be ridiculous. ... [but] they are important only as they enter into the process of interpretation and definition out of which joint actions are formed.", and the second of Blumer's (1969:2-6) three basic premises regarding interactionism, as described by Meltzer et al (1975:1), reiterates the value of structure as a mediating factor:

> "First, human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Secondly, these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society. Thirdly, these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he/she encounters.".

Mangham's emphasis upon the nature of interactionist 'scripts' may be misleading about the degree of dynamism recognised in interactionist analysis. He observes that (1978:27):

> "In many circumstances, perhaps even in most, the social actor is constrained by the scripts available to him, but in many, if not in most, he has the possibility of choice, the potential to create or revise his scripts.".

Perhaps conscious of the hint of predetermination that his analogy implies, Mangham (pp 130,131) reasserts:

> "Nonetheless there are few situational scripts which so thoroughly constrain the social actor that he is reduced to the status of a pawn. Many scripts appear to leave some opportunities for strategic interaction on the part of the participants, and a number of them leave considerable room. At the point of selection of scripts and at the point of movement from one script to another, considerable opportunities for strategic interaction appear to be open to social actors.".

That dynamism is intrinsic to the analysis is stressed by Lauer and Handel:

> "It is important to note that, as with other concepts, the definition of a situation is processual in the sense of being more or less fluid. That is, one does not continue to define situations in a similar fashion throughout one's life and may not do so throughout a specific situation. ....
> Definitions change in the course of interaction both by design and as an unanticipated consequence of the interaction. When we say 'by design' we mean that one or more of the interactants strives to change the definition maintained by one or more of the interactants." (1977:87).

The authors also address the problems that arise when definitions of a situation are not mutually compatible. They describe three options (1977:116,117), which are that, "one may terminate the interaction", "the person may simply accept the definition of the situation preferred by the other people involved", or "the person may attempt to impose his or her definition of the situation on the other participants.".

An interactionist perspective, therefore, properly encompasses the existence of conflict in interaction. Mangham identifies two

types of change in patterns of social interaction, one of which is mutually stimulated and accommodated by the social actors, but the other, "is marked by either the social actors stepping outside the situational scripts and radically revising them or the script being rewritten by one or more social actors without the cooperation of the others." (1978:76). In essence, his dramaturgical model, "stresses that there are likely to be competing definitions of the situation, competing needs and competing repertoires. It assumes, that is, pluralism rather than unitarism." (1978:132), and his model assumes that, "differences are inevitable and are enforced by differing interpretations, that processes of collaboration (however temporary) and competition (however covert) do occur, and that coercion, dialogue, and negotiation may exist side by side within the same situational script." (1978:133).

The relationship between interactionism and negotiated order theory is now quite obvious. The latter describes the structure obtained by the totality of definitions of the situation; the means by which definitions are achieved, maintained and revised; and the processes by which changes or conflicts in definition are resolved. Strauss (1978:14) confirms that, "One of the intellectual traditions that would logically seem more hospitable to considering negotiations as among the central processes is that known as 'interactionism'." and he regards negotiated order theory as strengthening the bridge between structure and process. The increase in the interest in negotiated order, "is explainable largely in terms of the heightened search by some interactionists for a joining of social structural and social interactional considerations but with the antideterministic stance still intact" (1978:16) and he adds that his own theoretical

position is a variant of the interactionist approach. He argues that (1978:253):

> "larger structural considerations need to be explicitly linked with microscopic analyses of negotiation processes. Negotiations always take place within social settings. The various structural conditions of the settings affect the actions of the negotiating parties, the aims they pursue through negotiation and alternative modes of action, their tactics during the negotiations, and, undoubtedly, the outcomes of the negotiations themselves - which in turn may affect not only future courses of action but also the social settings themselves.".

Mangham (1978:27) recognises the place of negotiation in an interactionist perspective. "Meanings, identities, definitions, purposes, and intentions are, indeed given, institutionalized, and shared, but are modified by negotiation and through interaction.". Reciprocally, Strauss (1978:23) almost reiterates an interactionist analysis:

> "Furthermore, negotiation takes place in specific relationships with other modes of action, in accordance with how the actors perceive current situations. But what modes are judged as possible, impossible, probable, improbable, are linked not only with their perceived efficacy but also with the actors' views of how change can be effected, given what they believe is the nature of history and society and of negotiation.".

Negotiation is also a feature for the work of Goffman. In particular, when situational definitions are not compatible and one does not gain supremacy at the expense of the total rejection of the others, a compromise needs to be achieved, to which Goffman gave the label of a "working consensus". Lauer and Handel (1977:119) consequently note that, "The achievement of a working consensus requires negotiation, not merely as a metaphor, but in the full, literal sense of that term.".

One of the benefits of Strauss's work is that it provides a mechanism for analysing negotiation but he has to emphasise, "that its study brings us to the heart of studying social orders" (1978:235) because of a concern that it may only be used where negotiation that

might otherwise be termed pragmatic bargaining is apparent, as in industrial relations. However, this more limited context is providing practical verification of the value of the concept of a negotiated order and the processes used to achieve it. It has been central to a number of studies, including, for example, those by Partridge (1976) and Armstrong et al (1981) and it is supported by, and provides explanation for, much that was discovered in the Llandough data.

Conclusion

It is interesting to note that two very disparate commentaries about research into participation, one at an international level and the other specific to the NHS, present the same signposts for future research. The I.L.O. has stated (1981:38) that:

> "workers' participation in decision-making is not something that can be set once and for all in a particular pattern; it is rather a general trend which seems likely to become gradually more pronounced. It is essentially a dynamic process. Any definition of workers' participation can only be provisional because the practical circumstances in which it is to operate are subject to changes, social and cultural as well as economic and technical. ... Generalisation would therefore seem to be very hazardous. It is noticeable that the advocates of reforms leading to greater workers' participation in decisions are increasingly aware of the diversity of situations and hence of the need for a corresponding diversity of method.".

Sethi and Dimmock (1982:364) urge that:

> "it is important to commence investigations into the *dynamic* of collective bargaining. Hitherto examinations of health sector industrial relations have been carried out largely by official enquiries, sponsored by government or governmental agencies. Moreover these have generally been occasioned by untypical events, e.g. strikes, the demands of income policy, etc.. As such these enquiries tend to be post facto, and their underlying aim has often been to provide a 'politically' feasible solution to a perceived problem: the provision of a temporary modus vivendi for the parties involved. The principle requirement is for studies concerned with the day-to-day conduct of industrial relations in the health sector.".

This was the intention, at least, of the research and it is hoped that the remainder of the thesis will provide some small contribution towards meeting this requirement.

Chapter Three

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

It has been said that the National Health Service is the tenth largest organisation in the world and that three of the few that exceed it are the U.S. Army, the Russian Army and the Chinese Army. This may be apocryphal but it can be confidently estimated that almost one million people work in the Health Service in Great Britain. In England alone there were 664,000 people employed in the NHS in 1971 and by 1981 the number had risen to 822,000 (DHSS 1983). Although the number employed in the NHS as a proportion of the total population is lower than those employed in comparable Western European health systems, it still equates to 5% of Britain's working population. As an employing organisation it is also exceptional in that it is so labour intensive that staff costs account for approximately 80% of total NHS expenditure, which itself is about 6% of the country's gross national product.

The Sacred Cow

Most of the other countries of Western Europe spend more of their gross national product than Britain on health care services and in countries such as West Germany and Sweden the proportion rises to 10%, but the efficiency of the NHS is still under constant scrutiny. This is because 6% of GNP is still a lot of money and secondly, but probably more importantly, the NHS is both funded almost entirely by taxation and administered by the state, thus avoiding the profit nexus. This means that the service is largely free at the point of use but

also that there are strong financial temptations to encourage challenging competition from private health care enterprises and to develop them so that they can take over the most costly elements of NHS facilities. The Times has reported (17.6.82.):

> "Ministers come and go, but the National Health Service continues to roll on its way like some ancient liner, whose dusky saloons may receive a degree of superficial refurbishment now and then, but whose replacement by a new superliner or a fleet of high performance privateers is beyond its owners' resources of energy and imagination. For rival vessels in the private sector which had hoped for its retirement or at least some kind of coordination of sailing schedules, the unchangeability of the old Leviathan is frustrating.".

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, Mr Norman Fowler, is described as one of several Conservative health ministers who would like to see a substantial alteration in the method of funding health services but an explanation is provided about why he has failed to do so:

> "Mr Fowler's zeal remains great, but ministers do not sit in his chair long without realising that for all its flaws the NHS is still one of the few genuine sacred cows of British politics, fundamentally trusted and cherished, and that any government which tampers with it does so at its peril.".

As an employing organisation, the NHS has an exceptionally high profile that attracts political and social controversy combined with highly articulate and profoundly emotional support. "The NHS is the principal embodiment in Britain of a particular ideal of social provision: the strong tang of ideology constantly attracts the flies of debate." (Times Leader 2.10.82.). In the Sunday Times Review (24.7.83. p 37) Angela Neustatter reports that:

> "yet increasingly the NHS is under fire because it is not run as a business, concerned with balancing the books, producing tangible proof of efficiency, spurred on by the threat of competition.",

and she continues by describing a nurse's complaint that because of

inadequate staffing she cannot provide for her patients' psychological comfort.

> "In that comment I believe she hit the reason why we must cherish and support the NHS, why we must stop assuming it should be answerable to rigorous business standards and recognise that it is one of the few remaining representations of true ideology left in today's profit oriented, self-seeking way of life. The NHS, warts and all (and I know there are plenty of those) is about society being prepared to care for its members whatever their circumstances, virtues, vices, race, creed, when they are sick. It is the hallmark of civilisation that we are prepared to pay a remarkably small amount of our wealth into caring for each other, to exercise a communal compassion.".

There can be few employing organisations in the world required to meet, or which generate, claims such as these.

However, there are others who suggest that the lack of significant competition in the field of health care and the sensitivity with which the NHS is regarded by the public have led to waste and to exploitation by trade unions. When Secretary of State for Employment, Mr Norman Tebbit was quoted (South Wales Echo 21.7.82.) as stating that:

> "You will have noticed that our industrial problems are generally concentrated in the monopolies of the public sector. It is perhaps not surprising that those areas which are least protected from economic reality by lack of competition and vast sums of taxpayers' money are also those areas which have the greatest inefficiencies, the greatest waste and the greatest industrial unrest.".

The NHS is undoubtedly a unique enterprise in Britain but it also takes its place in the collection of state-run enterprises labelled as the public sector. This sector has always had tremendous political and economic significance and Taylor (1982b:58) has recorded that the Government has sought to act upon the sentiments expressed by Mr Tebbit:

> "There are growing signs that the Government, somewhat nervously, is edging towards an attempt to wrestle with the unions dominating public sector employment.
>
> The impetus comes from the fact that the public sector raises a formidable obstacle to the accomplishment of the Government's wider economic plan. Just over seven million people are estimated to have jobs in the public sector, over 30% of the entire labour force. Of these, getting on for 90%, it has been calculated, belong to trade unions - a far higher proportion than the numbers unionised in private employment. In the TUC, just over half the members are now in the public domain; their unions, too, have become increasingly influential in recent years. .... The National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) carry far more weight inside the TUC than in the past, and the TUC, in response, has become a more effective voice for the interests of organised labour in public employment. .... As the layers of administration in the Health Service and elsewhere have enlarged and increased, so the power of public service unionism has strengthened.".

With tensions like these at national level, which themselves largely reflect changes and tensions at local level, it is not surprising that industrial relations in the National Health Service have been an issue of major national concern during the last ten years. In its evidence to the Royal Commission on the National Health Service, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) went so far as to warn that:

> "In our view the NHS has reached a stage where it should review its IR policies and practices. Unless effective remedies are introduced urgently, we can see little prospect of avoiding continued deterioration in IR with associated frustration of management and staff, increased labour turnover, and noticeably poorer quality patient care." (1978:24).

There is general agreement that 1972/3 saw the transformation of industrial relations activity in the NHS. Until then it had rarely been in evidence and what Bosanquet (1979:1) has termed the, "old colonial system" of industrial relations operated. Dimmock (1977:131) explains why this was:

> "The extended period of industrial peace from 1948 to 1973 fostered and reinforced two basic beliefs about labour relations in the Health Service. One, that its objectives, the care of the sick, served to unify the workforce and to discourage industrial action which could be seen as being detrimental to the patients. Two, that the Whitley system had the ability to regulate effectively almost all aspects of the employment relationship. These two beliefs taken together, could, it was felt, explain the absence of conflict and the seeming difference in the substance and form of the Health Service industrial relations from that of industry.".

The nature of the influences responsible for the metamorphosis have been discussed elsewhere (eg. Bosanquet 1979, TUC Health Services Committee 1981, Fewtrell 1983, Clegg 1979:35-38) and there must still be some uncertainty about which were cause and which effect but it is relevant to identify some of the characteristics of NHS industrial relations following the 1972/3 campaign of industrial action by ancillary staffs in support of the national pay claim.

Two of the most fundamental changes are described by Dimmock (1977:132):

> "The uniqueness of the ancillary workers' dispute lay rather in its scale and its public challenge to the taboo of not overtly jeopardising patient care. At a deeper level, it marked a change of direction in workplace relationships in that it presented opportunities to the ancillary workers to participate in areas of decision-making which had hitherto been the prerogative of medical and administrative staff.".

Initially, the staff became involved in, or took over, decisions about what services were required in order to provide emergency cover during industrial disputes, but they also developed an awareness of their ability to exercise control over more general management concerns.

Involvement in the management function was further encouraged by the introduction of incentive bonus schemes for ancillary staff recommended in two reports of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (1967, 1971). The spread of these schemes was rather slower than it sometimes suggested but they produced a distinct re-alignment of the employing relationship. There was a formal requirement to involve staff and trade union representatives; it became possible to negotiate pay enhancement on a local basis; departmental rather than inter-departmental affiliation was encouraged; and demarcation lines between jobs had to be identified which stimulated the creation of great inflexibility.

The extent of industrial action never returned to its previous low levels and in fact increased. Comparing activity in the 1970s to that of the 1950s Baker and Caldwell (1981:46) calculate that the number of days lost in stoppages was on average four times higher, the number of workers involved in disputes increased threefold and individual strikers lost an average of eight days per year compared to a previous average of five. Membership of NUPE, COHSE and NALGO has nearly quadrupled since 1949 and in the four years alone between 1974 and 1978 both NUPE and COHSE increased their membership by one third and together had almost half a million members. NUPE authorised the election of shop stewards for the first time in 1970 and the Health Service did not recognise shop stewards until the following year.

Management had to rapidly orientate itself to the new industrial relations climate among its staff and to radical new employment legislation. Personnel departments were established or strengthened

and formal procedures were produced for handling issues such as discipline, grievances and disputes. The Whitley Council system of nationally determining terms and conditions of service was both formally reviewed (McCarthy 1976) and came under pragmatic pressure for reform during industrial disputes, and by 1985 pay determination for medical staff, nurses and midwives, works craftsmen and professions supplementary to medicine had been removed from the Whitley arenas and passed to pay review bodies.

Serious discontent has persisted about NHS pay, in absolute terms, in comparison with other industries and in terms of internal differentials. Public opinion is usually ambivalent about NHS pay and industrial disputes, since it particularly has sympathy with direct patient care staff and has some sympathy for the lower paid ancillary staff but objects to the disruption to patient services that trade unions generate as part of pay campaigns. One consequence of this has been an attempt by the trade unions to create a fusion in the public mind between the welfare of their members and the future and quality of the Health Service. Nationally at least this has become increasingly difficult. 1979 was the worse year for industrial conflict in the history of the NHS, with almost half of the staff involved in stoppages and the loss of more than half a million working days. The number of days lost per one thousand employees in the NHS in recent years has usually been less than a tenth of the corresponding figure for Britain as a whole, but in the 1960s it was often a hundredth or less (Times 27.4.82.). During the 1982 national pay dispute another Times Leader (10.8.82.) rigorously attacked the lack of conscience of Health Service workers:

> "Nothing illustrates more cogently the way mass movements destroy the individual's sense of responsibility and morality than the comments of leaders of the Health Service strikers, and the actions they require of their followers.".

It concluded:

> "Would any of those strikers, acting without the comforting but corrupting embrace of trade union rhetoric, feel the same inclination, as individuals, to withdraw their services unilaterally and then accuse somebody else of blackmailing them into it by a refusal to advance them more money?
> It is their decision, each one of them, and nobody else can be blamed for it.".

Bosanquet is more charitable and urges the necessity of further analysis:

> "The record suggested that the NHS has had about the IR it deserved and about what might have been expected, given the backwardness of the system. Press comment and public policy have, again and again, dealt with the symptoms rather than the causes." (1979:22).

Another symptom rather than cause of the transformation in NHS industrial relations has been the way that participation by staff in the management of the NHS has evolved. As Dimmock (1977:122) suggests, "two vehicles for worker participation - collective bargaining and joint consultation - have been operated in the Service since its inception in 1948.", but, because until 1970 collective bargaining was almost entirely concerned with national negotiations about terms and conditions of service, for most of the life of the NHS participation has been synonymous with joint consultation. Section XXIV of the Handbook of the General Whitley Council was issued in 1950 to recommend and advise on the establishment of joint consultative committees of management and staff. The guidance was that the committees' functions should be to promote the closest co-operation, to give the staffs a wider interest in and a greater responsibility for the conditions under which their work was

performed, to prevent friction and misunderstanding, to consider locally determined hospital rules and to deal with matters such as the distribution of working hours, holiday arrangements and questions of physical welfare, but the limitations and examples described indicate that the scope for discussion was seriously restricted.

The consequences were virtually inevitable. Miles and Smith surveyed 197 JCCs in the mid-1960s and concluded (1969:80), "what has long been an open secret, namely that, so far, consultation in the hospital service must, with few exceptions, be pronounced a failure.". They suggested that the reasons for this were a general lack of commitment among hospital managers, a complete absence of training for representatives in the concepts and skills of consultation, the reluctance of the General Whitley Council to respond to enquiries for further guidance and the refusal of doctors to participate. An additional handicap identified by McCarthy (1976) was the inadequate, inappropriate and unco-ordinated composition of the staff side. ACAS observed (1978:20) that:

> "In the past, NHS JCCs have foundered regularly and we conclude that one reason for this has often been the unrealistic limitations on their terms of reference which fell short of employee expectations.".

It notes that:

> "Some JCCs exercise considerable influence over major policy decisions, while others are limited to the discussion of inconsequential issues and used as a rubber stamp for unilateral management decisions",

and it recommends that:

> "If JCCs are to be credible they must perform a significant role in the decision making process, and if this is to be their purpose it is clear that the constitution of many JCCs is inadequate for the demands which unions place upon them.".

Its advice is that one of the most crucial determinants of the

success of joint consultation is the subject matter which management is prepared to include in it.

Section XXIV of the General Council Handbook was replaced in 1980 by far more flexible guidance about joint consultation machinery in the NHS but by this time interest had been developed in how to exercise participation in other ways. When Mrs Barbara Castle was Secretary of State for Health and Social Services she was particularly enthusiastic that there should be staff representatives on the statutory health authorities at regional and area level, in addition to the two doctors and one nurse that were already obligatory. In her second consultative paper, Mrs Castle stated her intention that the representatives should be elected and invited comments on how this should be arranged. The purpose of the change was that the representatives, "will be aware of the view of their fellow workers and so help to ensure that authorities are fully responsive to the importance of staff relations in all aspects of their work." (quoted in Dimmock 1977:136). The TUC Health Services Committee keenly supported the idea in principle but wished to see the number of staff representatives increased to 50% of each authority and ironically it was probably the delay caused by this pressure that meant that, because Mrs Castle was replaced by Mr David Ennals and a general election was looming, the proposals for any staff representatives at all were dropped completely.

The other alternative development in participation has not only survived but also eclipsed or mutated joint consultation. Local collective bargaining is now recognised as legitimate throughout the Health Service and is accommodated both formally and informally. Furthermore, shop stewards have not readily responded to attempts to

channel them into joint consultation arrangements. A number of health authorities have concluded that if joint consultative arrangements will either be ignored by the shop stewards or exploited for collective bargaining purposes it is preferable for new structures and systems to be established which explicitly and formally recognise the inevitability of negotiation within any consultative arrangement. Sethi et al (1982:224) have described that:

> "First, these structures have usually been established jointly by local managements and trade union representatives in the absence of guidance from either the Whitley Councils or the government Health Departments. Secondly, the need for hospital managements to create and maintain a dialogue with locally militant ancillary staffs has been a major reason for their introduction. Thirdly, although local managements generally maintain that these committees are only used for the purpose of 'consulting' staff it can be suggested that some aspects of their business are conducted by straightforward collective bargaining. Fourthly, while there is no clear picture of items normally under consideration it can be suggested that management inspired innovations to established working practices tend to be accompanied by concessions on matters deemed important by the staffs' representatives.".

With this change from the joint consultation of the old colonial system to local collective bargaining of an industrial model has come a reassessment of the relationships between the different trade unions and staff organisations representing Health Service staff. Greater rivalry for membership has developed between the major trade unions and also in many locations the main trade unions, representing large numbers of members but in a small number of departments, began to resent the alleged influence of representatives from the great many professional and staff organisations, with most only representing a small number of members in one department. There has therefore often been a split between the trade unions and staff organisations affiliated to the TUC and those which are not and the first have refused to attend meetings with the second. Health authorities

responded to this in different ways but they have largely either met the wish for separate consultation/negotiation machinery or have maintained the existing formal consultation systems, which have only been used by the TUC non-affiliates, and met representatives of TUC-affiliated organisations either informally or on an ad hoc basis.

In addition, separate arrangements for consultation have been made to meet one of the obligations of the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act. Employers are statutorily bound to instigate health and safety committees where two or more health and safety representatives of trade unions or staff organisations request them to do so. These committees are now commonplace in the Health Service and include representatives from both TUC-affiliated and non-affiliated organisations.

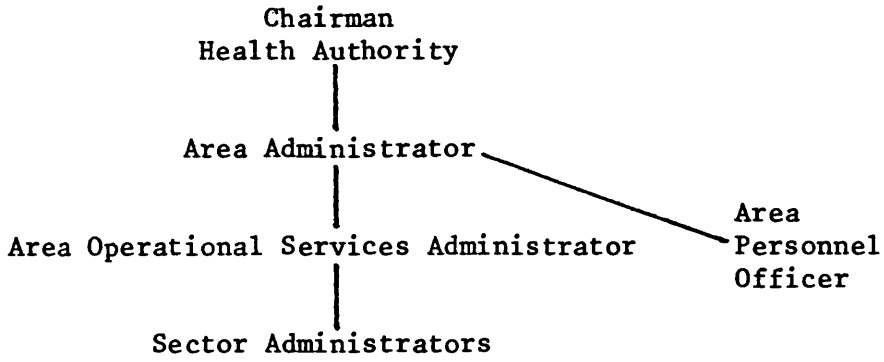
South Glamorgan

Nearly all of these national characteristics of NHS industrial relations are present in South Glamorgan Health Authority but in a number of other respects it is quite exceptional. South Glamorgan Health Authority (Teaching) was established in 1974 to serve Cardiff and the coastal and rural locations of the Vale of Glamorgan. In 1982 the designation 'Teaching' was dropped but the health authority remains the only teaching authority in Wales and there is extensive collaboration with the University of Wales College of Medicine. Unlike England, there is no regional health authority and political accountability is not through the Department of Health and Social Security. It relates directly to the Welsh Office and is funded from the Welsh vote rather than the health vote. Its budget, which in

1974/5 was approximately £120 million, is one of the largest of any health authority in Great Britain and it employs approximately 12,500 staff. It serves a population of 390,000 for general medical services, 420,000 for mental illness services, 530,000 for mental handicap services, and there are many regional and sub-regional specialties. It has a large number of hospitals of all types, organised into five groups called sectors until 1982 and health units afterwards, and of these three are for acute general services with over six hundred beds each.

During the course of the research the management arrangements for the health authority changed both in terms of structure and personality. As well as describing the entire organisation, the term 'health authority' also refers to the statutory body of members responsible for its management. Some members are nominated by the Secretary of State for Wales, others by local councils and others are representative of interested bodies, such as the medical and nursing professions, the College of Medicine and the TUC. The Chairman of the health authority is a part-time appointment made by the Secretary of State. The administrative structure immediately below this level that related most directly to the management of the hospitals when the research commenced is shown in Diagram One.

Diagram One

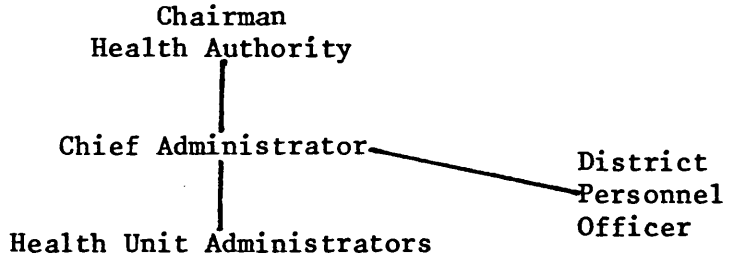


Health Authority Administrative Struction 1974-1982 (simplified)

In practice this structure was rather more fluid than it has been represented. There were several occasions when the Area Administrator was absent either because of annual leave or sickness and at these times the Operational Services Administrator, Personnel Officer and another administrator on a similar grade took it in turns to act up.

In 1982 the Health Service was reorganised again and the Area Operational Services Administrator gained a Chief Administrator's post in another Welsh health authority. The structure became that shown in Diagram Two.

Diagram Two



Health Authority Administrative Structure 1982-1984 (simplified)

The Chief Administrator's periods of sickness continued and the District Personnel Officer acted up on alternate occasions. Once the Chief Administrator made it known that he wished to retire early on the grounds of ill health, the District Personnel Officer was appointed as the acting Chief Administrator and he subsequently obtained the substantive post. In November 1984, at the beginning of the next NHS reorganisation, he was appointed as the health authority's General Manager. He is referred to as H. in the thesis.

The sectors/units were subject to some revision both in response to changes in personnel and as part of the formal 1982 reorganisation. The research was undertaken in Llandough Hospital and in 1979 it was in a sector which consisted only of itself and a nearby, longer-stay general hospital of 150 beds. By 1982 the sector had been enlarged by the inclusion of the regional spinal injuries hospital and three small hospitals for general practice, geriatrics and out-patients in a nearby town. During the 1982 reorganisation the regional spinal injury unit was returned to its original unit and replaced by the Blood Transfusion Service, but essentially the new health unit contained the hospitals serving the west of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, a total of 660 beds. During the course of the research the health authority proposed to close a specialist orthopaedic hospital in another unit but this decision was reversed by the Secretary of State for Wales after a public campaign mainly orchestrated by the bodies representing the interests of the staff in the hospital.

All the major health service trade unions and staff organisations are represented in South Glamorgan Health Authority but while some full-time officials, officers and members, particularly those in NUPE,

COHSE and GMBATU, are regarded as especially active and willing to use industrial action, the health authority has not experienced the degree of aggression or disruption that has been experienced in other urban or South Wales health authorities. The only significant causes of industrial action across the health authority have been disputes during national pay negotiations. Strong campaigns have been waged, so far successfully, against hospital closures and competitive tendering but these have involved little industrial action affecting patient services. Even when, in 1982, the health authority rescinded its policy of never making staff redundant and actually declared that redundancies would be required, no industrial action was forthcoming then or during the redundancy process.

In the general hospitals the most active trade union is NUPE. The full-time officer changed in 1981 and in 1982 its structure was modified to match that of the revised health units. A branch, with a Chairman, Secretary and Assistant Secretary, was established for each health unit. They are co-ordinated by the full-time officer and at monthly meetings of the Branch District Health Committee. Inter-union co-ordination is minimal and largely restricted to specific campaigns. An Area-based joint consultative committee has existed for many years but for approximately the last five years the TUC-affiliated organisations have refused to participate while it still includes non-affiliated organisations. The format has been retained but the committee is now known as the Meeting of District Officers and Staff Organisations in recognition that the TUC affiliates will not attend. There are local consultative committees in some hospitals and the TUC-affiliated organisations appear to be involved in some of them and not others. A number of hospitals have

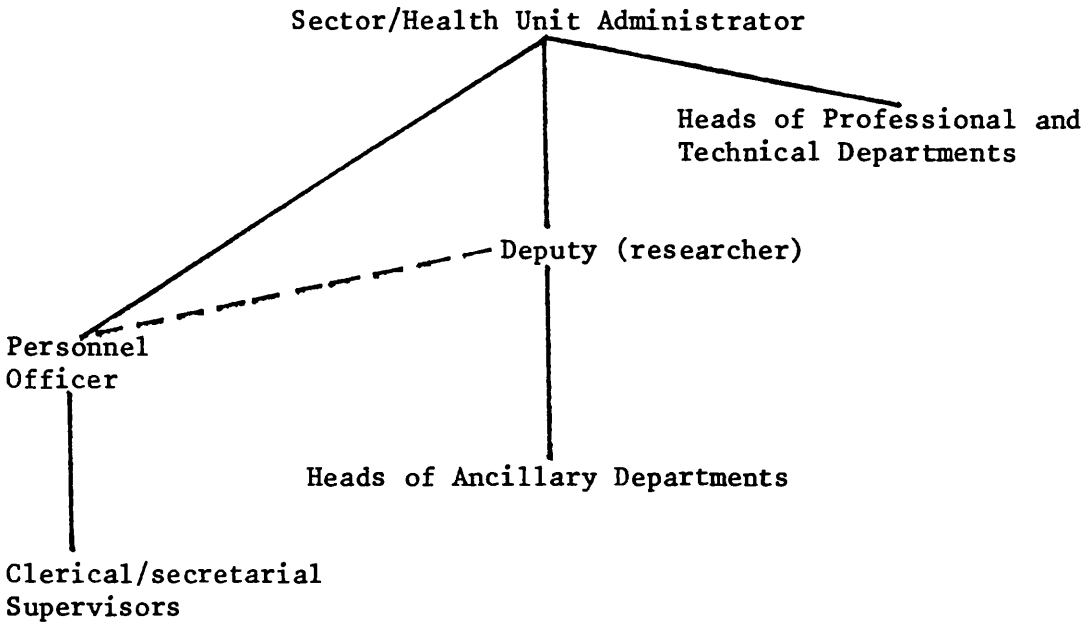
local health and safety committees in which there has never been any difficulty in combining the interests of both affiliates and non-affiliates.

Llandough Hospital

The researcher was the administrator of Llandough Hospital. This is a teaching hospital of 420 beds and provides most of the district general hospital functions for the west of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. It also contains more specialised services, such as sub-regional thoracic surgery and paediatric oncology. The budget allocated to the administrator in 1984/5 i.e. for all items except works, medical and nursing staff, was approximately £6 million. Unlike most of the other hospitals in South Glamorgan Health Authority, it has a readily-discernible, local catchment population for both patients and staff.

During the research period the management structure for administrative, ancillary and professional and technical staff in the hospital was as follows:

Diagram Three



Llandough Hospital Administrative Structure 1979-1983

The Sector/Health Unit Administrator and Personnel Officer arrived towards the end of 1978 and the researcher took up post as Hospital Administrator for Llandough Hospital and Deputy Sector Administrator in the summer of 1979. Since then, the heads of the professional and technical departments have remained relatively stable but there have been substantial changes amongst the administrative supervisors and ancillary departments. The Domestic Services Manager, who was also a NALGO representative, retired in 1983 and her duties taken over by the Personnel Officer, with enhanced responsibility upon the domestic supervisors. All three senior porters retired between 1980 and 1984 and in 1985 the Head Porter was retired early on the grounds of redundancy and three new posts of a 'working' Head Porter and two deputies were created. The Catering Manager left at the beginning of 1984 to have a baby and to move to another part of

the country. The Hospital Cashier left in 1980 for personal reasons, the Out-patient Manager left in 1982 for promotion within the health authority and the Supervisor of Medical Secretaries in 1983 to work outside the Health Service. This last departure was particularly significant since the supervisor had acted as an unofficial shop steward for NALGO members affected by management proposals to increase the flexibility of the medical secretaries.

The representation of the staff changed equally dramatically during the research period and at the end of the four years between 1981 and 1985 only three of the staff representatives interviewed still held office. In 1980 virtually 100% of the ancillary staff belonged to NUPE. The Branch Chairman and Secretary were both porters who originated from the South Wales valleys and were over fifty and had held office for several years. Just before the field-work began the Branch Secretary, who was also one of the senior porters, retired. The Chairman (Paul) wished to be formally appointed as senior shop steward and another porter in his fifties (Sam) was elected in his place. To maintain a representation of two from the portering staff another, younger porter (Colin) was also appointed as a shop steward, and a relatively young man (Bernard) was elected as shop steward for the operating department assistants (ODAs). There was another shop steward (Carol) for the catering staff and one for the evening housekeepers (Mary).

These arrangements were relatively short-lived. Unseen tensions within the union came to a head during the 1982 national pay dispute. Dissatisfaction with the extent to which the union wished to involve

the members in industrial action led to losses of members and officers to two new unions in the hospital. Approximately half of the porters, including Paul and Colin, transferred to the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and Colin and another porter were elected as shop stewards. After approximately a year Colin was able to persuade someone to take his place and he was able to stand down. The 1982 dispute also split the evening housekeepers and approximately half left to join COHSE and elected their own shop steward. There were still TGWU and COHSE members and representatives in the hospital in 1985 but they have shown little signs of activity and there is a belief that some of their members have drifted back to NUPE.

Following the 1982 dispute NUPE had to reconstruct its representation. It did this very efficiently and in doing so altered its image, style, affiliations and concerns quite radically. A housekeeping shop steward became Chairman and although Bernard stood down another ODA in his twenties was elected as Secretary. Two new, relatively young shop stewards were elected to represent the porters and housekeepers. In 1984 the catering shop steward (Carol) resigned from the post and two female kitchen staff in their twenties were appointed to replace her. At the end of the same year Dilys reverted to her duties as a shop steward for the housekeeping staff and another ODA in his twenties was elected as Chairman.

This was unusual for two reasons. Firstly, it meant that of the six basic grade ODAs one was the NUPE Branch Chairman and the other the NUPE Branch Secretary. Secondly, and more surprisingly, on 1 April 1984 the negotiation of the terms and conditions of service

of ODAs had transferred from the Ancillary Staff Whitley Council to one of the Professional and Technical Whitley Councils, which meant that in 1985 what was still by far the largest trade union for ancillary staff in the hospital had officers from the professional and technical staff. In addition to these changes in personalities, the union became more aggressive in its recruiting, more formal, more adept at using procedures, more cohesive within the hospital, enhanced its affiliation with the union in the health authority as a whole, and was more unashamedly prepared to use the media and personal attack as means of defending its members' interests.

Less traumatic but nevertheless important changes occurred in other trade unions and staff organisations in the hospital. One of the two NALGO representatives retired in 1983 and was not replaced and at the same time the remaining representative (Graham) wished to concentrate more on his career as one of the technical staff and wished to relinquish his union duties if a substitute could be found. This was not possible and gradually he has begun to resume some of the formal functions, such as distributing the NALGO newspaper, but he has not entered into industrial relations issues. The Society of Radiographers' representative (Meryl) continued with her responsibilities until the beginning of 1985 but then gained promotion in her department and resigned from her Society role. A recently qualified, male radiographer was elected to replace her. Finally, both ASTMS representatives (Eric and Bob) resigned from their office. They had been involved in trade union activity for many years and led the industrial action in support of a national pay claim in 1982 but Bob resigned from the union post shortly afterwards. Another man in his twenties was appointed as his successor and he and Eric led the

negotiations with local management about its proposals, which were subsequently implemented, to abolish overtime working on Saturday mornings. However, Eric relinquished his interest in trade union activities shortly afterwards.

Other features of the hospital also reflected and bore upon the nature of its industrial relations. There was no formal consultative committee but information of interest to staff was either sent to their head of department or relayed at heads of department meetings, and it was expected that they in turn would convey it to their staff. Meetings between management and representatives from more than one department have only been held in exceptional circumstances, such as when it became necessary to identify staff to be made redundant, but extensive consultation and negotiation took place on an informal basis between heads of departments, or administrators, and local trade union representatives. A health and safety committee was instigated at the end of 1979 and this has been actively supported by all trade unions and staff organisations represented in the hospital. It has also been deliberately allowed to provide a forum for wider debate in some circumstances. More formal discussion has also taken place with representatives of ancillary staff because almost every member of the ancillary staff is on an incentive bonus scheme that has either been introduced or advised since 1979. The porters' bonus scheme has been revised twice in this period but some of the porters still recall that their bonus scheme was introduced in 1970 and was therefore one of the very first in the Health Service and that because of their inexperience of negotiating such schemes at the time they lost a large number of staff with an inadequate target bonus payment as compensation.

The Research Springboard

It was in fact the experience of attempting to exercise influence over the portering department and to modify its working practices that was mainly responsible for questioning the received wisdom regarding management theory described in Chapter One. There were four local incidents of industrial action, each lasting less than twenty four hours, between 1979 and 1981 and this caused concern, but an even more fundamental dilemma was what appeared to be the virtual impossibility of achieving change however much one discussed it informally and in an unthreatening manner with the NUPE representatives. Two of the disputes showed that all was not well generally but the other two were specific manifestations of this problem.

One of the first type of dispute arose out of the case of a porter who was believed had gone to the local pub whilst he was supposed to be on duty. He went off sick immediately after this allegation was reported and informed the Head Porter that he would be absent for one week. During this time information was being collated about the incident so that on the first day that he returned a disciplinary hearing could be convened. Unfortunately, without warning, he appeared at work two days earlier than expected and since the case was not entirely ready he had to be suspended until the incident had been fully investigated and his case could be heard. The suspension was not formal disciplinary action but the NUPE Branch Chairman and Secretary considered that I had been quite unreasonable. It was not only disappointing not to be able to convince them of the fairness of the action but even more perplexing that as a result of this disagreement they straight-away organised the withdrawal of the

porters' labour for several hours. The porter was, incidentally, interviewed the following week and dismissed, without appeal.

The second general incident occurred when the regional spinal injuries unit was part of the same sector. The sector administrator had become involved in a dispute there about the flexibility of the porters and eventually the porters went on strike. When this happened the word went around the health authority that all other ancillary staff would come out in sympathy. With my permission, the NUPE Branch Secretary and Chairman held a meeting of the ancillary staff in Llandough Hospital. I asked if I could address the meeting as well but was refused entry into the room. The staff took industrial action but then realised that no other hospital in the health authority had followed suit and so returned to work. Again, though, it revealed that the staff at Llandough had a propensity to industrial action that was not evident elsewhere in the health authority and this generated a concern about why this was and what management could do about it. With hindsight, it is likely that this dispute stimulated the first serious dissent within NUPE that manifest itself later in the year during the national pay negotiations when staff joined other trade unions.

The disputes about working practices were more straightforward. On one occasion a large lorry arrived at one of the pharmacy departments and needed to be unloaded. This was usually done by two ancillary staff but neither was available and there was a danger that if there was a delay in unloading the lorry the driver would not wait and supplies to the wards would be affected. The porters on duty at

the time could be spared from other duties and were asked by the Head Porter if they would help out. None of them volunteered and I then discussed the problem with the NUPE Branch Chairman. He was adamant that the job was not one that a porter should do and eventually, with time running out, I had to instruct him to unload the lorry and as a consequence the porters went on strike. The second dispute occurred after many weeks had been spent at attempting to incorporate the collection and delivery of pathology specimens, and an additional person to do it, into the portering department. Again, the porters' NUPE representatives were adamant that this was not a job for porters, although it involved only routine fetching and carrying, and therefore when the individual doing the job went on sick leave, in the absence of agreement an instruction had to be issued for the work to be covered and industrial action by the porters followed.

These problems have now all been overcome and the porters at Llandough Hospital are of a high standard, providing a flexible service that meets the hospitals' needs and at near minimum cost. The number of staff and the amount of overtime worked have been reduced but the target bonus has been increased and the supervisory arrangements have been modified so that they more appropriately meet the needs of both the portering staff and management. At the inception of the research, however, there was little indication that these goals would be achieved or that if they were that it would not be without a succession of incidents of industrial action that would bring both the staff of the hospital and the management into disrepute. The research enquiry sought to identify whether staff participation

in the management function might provide one of the mechanisms for achieving these objectives without organisational disruption.

The Representatives

One of the issues to be addressed in this thesis is that of dynamism in industrial relations and there can be no better way of representing it from the data than of summarising the points at which the individuals who represented the staff of Llandough Hospital in 1981 found themselves four years later.

Name	Union and Office	1985
Bernard	NUPE Shop Steward	No union duties
Bob	ASTMS Shop Steward	No union duties
Carol	NUPE Shop Steward	No union duties
Colin	NUPE Shop Steward	Head Porter
Dilys	NUPE Shop Steward	NUPE Shop Steward
Eric	ASTMS Shop Steward	No union duties
Graham	NALGO representative	NALGO representative
Mary	NUPE Shop Steward	NUPE Shop Steward
Meryl	Society of Radiographers' representative	Promoted and resigned as representative
Paul	Senior NUPE Shop Steward, formally Branch Chairman	Retired early on the grounds of ill health 1985
Sam	NUPE Branch Chairman	Retired early on the grounds of ill health 1985
Susan	NALGO representative	Retired 1983

For better of for worse, the administrative structure and personalities within the hospital have hardly altered at all during the same period.

Chapter Four

THE OPTIMISTIC JOURNEY

Candidates who sat the Personnel Management paper in the IHSA final examination in 1976 had the opportunity to answer the following question:

> What is 'participative management', and how do you see it working in the NHS?

At most the answer could obtain 20% of the total marks of the paper and, as a proportion of the time available, approximately 35 minutes was allowed for an answer. Several years later, reviewing my period of research into participation reveals, ironically, that I am probably less able to respond to the question than I would have been then. I am now aware of its full enormity and of what is required to minimally meet it satisfactorily, which could certainly not be done within the time limit. Secondly, I have learnt that <u>how</u> the answer is obtained is almost as important as what it consists of. The methodology of the research must be an integral part of the thesis but it is also offered here as the description of a learning process of value both to myself and to those who wish to contemplate their naval while the body it is part of carries on with its normal day-to-day activity.

The research lasted for four years and was undertaken whilst maintaining a full-time, demanding management post in Llandough Hospital. Its progress was at times erratic, confusing and unpredictable but an attempt has been made to emulate the discipline demonstrated by Berg (1979). He asks that:

> "It should be noted that even though the layout of the dissertation follows the logical development of the research work, it is in no way an accurate description of the research

process." (p 21)

but nevertheless he is able to describe the development of his dissertation with remarkable clarity. The different elements of the thesis research, with an indication of chronological order, can be isolated as follows:

1. Interested in management theory and experiencing industrial relations difficulties.

2. Identified participation as possibly relevant to industrial relations problems.

3. Outlined research objectives and method.

4. Began literature search.

5. Research procedure developed in greater detail.

6. Negotiated access.

7. Began collecting field data.

8. Substantially reduced research objectives and field data target.

9. Began processing and evaluating data.

10. Research modification and data-handling generated key issues.

11. Further modification of research design.

12. Presented data.

13. Interpretation.

14. Theoretical framework produced.

Each of these will be considered in turn.

1. The Theoretical/Practical Dichotomy

The pre-research history has been described in Chapters One and Three. Chapter One explained the professional training, theoretical antecedence to the research and Chapter Three portrayed some of the industrial relations problems that were being experienced before it began. Industrial relations were very time-consuming, it was exceptionally difficult to gain consent for change and there was a demonstrated readiness to use industrial action of all sorts, including striking. Professional training as a hospital administrator and as a personnel officer tended to emphasise the neo-human relations school of management theory, with the suggestion that staff treated as reasonable, responsible and concerned will act as such. It was my belief that this was what I was doing but yet it did not appear to be improving the industrial relations climate in the hospital.

2. The Relevance of Participation

The tensions between theory and practice were so strong that I felt that I was almost in a void between the two, keenly seeking practical validation of the theory, or practical or theoretical

remedies for the operational problem. I wanted to find out, for example, why it was that local trade union representatives felt that nationally agreed terms and conditions of service could be bargained locally. I was particularly interested in examining the place of ideology in the NHS since I found it difficult to accept that an adversarious relationship should exist between staff and management in an organisation founded on the highest principles of egalitarianism. It was research into participation, however, that seemed to provide the best opportunity for resolving the theory/practice dilemma. On the one hand, the success or failure of participation seemed to supply an almost structural test of neo-human relations theory, and on the other, it was possibly true that participation would improve the industrial relations climate, especially if it meant that staff would accept that they could only operate within the constraints imposed upon management, such as budgets and government policy.

3. Outline of Research Objectives and Method

With hindsight, the endeavour to resolve these issues is still laudable but naive, over-ambitious and confused and this is evident from the summary of research intent produced before the formal research process commenced. In just one sentence I recognised that the research would raise:

> "crucial problems of the definition of participative management, the form of alternative models of participative management and the quantification of industrial relations character and intensity."!

I continued by stating that I would seek to define the continuum of participation and its limits, and would do so by:

> "examining previous theoretical constructs; attempting to differentiate between consultation, participation and socialist

> management or worker control; and examining the role in the management process in the NHS of those currently considered to be participating in it e.g. doctors and GPs.".

I was going to look at what was the most suitable level of participation in the Health Service and in doing this I was going to analyse the issues in which staff would be involved if participation was practised beyond hospital level. It was proposed to examine how participation could be formally structured, whether a representative system would be required, and if so on what basis representatives should be selected.

The existing nature of staff involvement at hospital level was going to be established and this was going to be achieved by obtaining, "a basically descriptive, formal objective assessment" and by, "the subjective assessment of both managers and staff representatives.". Staff aspirations were to be investigated and in particular I intended to see how the desire for participative management related to various features of work, such as the nature of the work, the type of work organisation, the perceived management style, and present access to the management process. I was also anxious to determine whether staff would rather co-operate in a participative structure, with an explicit understanding that they share the constraints upon management, or would rather maintain their collective bargaining activities, which I described as, "less intellectually rigorous, more emotionally satisfying and more liable to maintain and increase staff cohesion.". It was recognised that there might be strong organisational constraints upon the development of participation, especially because of the anxiety of managers about its implications.

The proposed research was to involve staff, trade union representatives and managers in several hospitals, and not only in South Glamorgan but also in West and Mid Glamorgan. Full-time trade union officials throughout these areas would be included as well. In addition to this field research, there would be statistical analysis of industrial relations activity and managers would need to self-record informal industrial relations approaches. Although an essentially qualititive approach to the research was to be adopted, one of the research purposes was to identify the effect of enhanced participation upon the general industrial relations climate, which suggested affinity with a pseudo-scientific approach. And although it did not even feature in the summary of research intent, another objective was to attempt to assess the impact of myself as an internal researcher by comparing the data I derived from other hospitals with that I obtained from my own.

Sufficient realism was retained to at least briefly record that one of the things that the method of research would essentially depend upon was the time available from work. These research objectives and methods, described, it must be reiterated, before the formal research process began, were inevitably impossible to translate into action but they contain key themes that were maintained as central to the research even when it was rather more pragmatically defined.

The conviction remained that the research should holistic. Even if no attempt was to be made to establish the nature of the relationship between participation and the industrial relations climate generally, it still seemed inconceivable that issues relating to

participation could be considered in isolation from other features of workplace industrial relations activity and relationships. This may appear self-evident but in fact has not been regarded as such by other commentators. Bartlett (1982), for example, has reported how he obtained the verdicts of managers and staff in four companies about the potential usefulness and actual success of a wide range of participative practices. He did so by using an audit approach, one which related solely to categories of participation that he had predetermined and classified according to four different degrees of influence. There is no assessment at all of how the managers' and staff's concepts of participation related to or were determined by the wider industrial relations forum and it appears to have been assumed that participation is an end in itself and not something which other participants in the industrial relations system may use as a means to other ends.

However, at this stage of the thesis research design the idea of auditing not just participative practices but industrial relations activity and relationships generally was an attractive one. Taking an holistic approach to the study of participation not only meant that a distinction of pure artificiality would be avoided but also that it would be related to a context of high trade union membership and frequent activity. This has been unusual in previous research about participation and it is interesting to note that when Bate and Mangham were discussing with representatives of a company which of its three sites should be chosen for an experiment in worker involvement:

> "Glasgow was ruled out on the grounds that it was unionised and 'we already have more than enough problems with their involvement as it is.'" (1981:15).

The desire to relate attitudes to participation with attitudes to work was largely sustained but substantially modified. Initially, there was almost an inclination to pursue the method described by Warr and Wall (1975:92):

> "The most common approach to the study of participative leadership has been based upon a correlational research design. .... Typically, investigators have looked for differences in leadership styles across different work situations and have examined the relationship at one point in time between a manager's style and the attitudes of his subordinates.".

Part of the attraction of this approach was that practical experience as a manager indicated that the orthodox association of participation and well-being at work was not accurate and could be refuted by the very means that had been used to achieve this conclusion. Warr and Wall (p 103) recognise that:

> "Taken together, these experimental studies are no more than *suggestive* of a positive causal relationship between immediate participation and employee satisfaction. Given the widely held belief that such a causal link is well substantiated .... it is worth elaborating on the major weaknesses in the available evidence.".

These they describe as statistical inadequacy, a bias of female employees in much of the evidence and the small number of employees involved in the experiments. Without being aware of it, this is the point at which my interest in relating attitudes to participation with attitudes to work and industrial relations behaviour generally deviated from that of others who have sought to establish the correlation. All three of Warr and Wall's criticisms of previous surveys are pseudo-scientific and it becomes apparent that this is the type of research they wish to see continued, but more rigorously.

From the outset, this type of approach, or what I later came to recognise as a systems theory orientation, was rejected. I brought to the research a heightened awareness of the significance of the

subjective interpretation of the participants in industrial relations, of unpredictability, of misunderstanding, of manipulation and of irrationality. The error of attempting to segregate independent and dependent variables in group activity and then measuring their effect upon each other has been well demonstrated by Mangham (1978). One example that he is particularly critical of is the work of Kahn (1974):

> "The idea that the independent variable automatically exercises its influence upon the dependent variables, apparent though this may be in the physical sciences, is, a fallacy in the social sciences. The process of definition by the social actors involved appears to me to be absolutely crucial. Kahn's workers must define 'participation' for it to have any effect upon their productivity and their satisfaction. One group of workers may define participation as 'manipulation' and behave in a particular way while another group define it as 'freedom' and behave in a different way. The intervening interpretation is crucial to the outcome. It provides the meaning which sets the response and as such it should be necessary to incorporate it into the account of the research. Kahn's proposal, and the work of many others involved in research into organisations, assumes a fixity of meaning for the chosen variables which in most cases is unwarranted." (p 9).

So it was never part of the original research intent to use methods of such comparative sterility. The research was to be about the subjective assessments or, to use the cliche, the 'perceptions' of the participants in the industrial relations forum. Even so, it was not proposed to make any substantial use of the most obvious way of doing this, particularly in view of the original scope of the research, which was to assess attitudes by questionnaire. The original research intent referred to questionnaires but it was anticipated that these would only be used as a way of helping to structure the data, which would largely be derived from interviews. The methodological problems of questionnaires have been well-rehearsed and are readily apparently in studies of participation. G Strauss (1977:387) has observed that:

> "The kinds of participation workers *say* they want may be very different from what they *really* want. .... what forms of participation people say they want will, of course, be influenced by the rhetoric of their leaders, the values of their peers, or even by the way the question is worded."

and he continues:

> "Even among workers, responses to questions as to participation may differ depending upon the context in which they are asked. .... Even more dramatically, Ramsay (1976a) asked four different versions of essentially the same question regarding the desirability of participation at the company wide level and got seemingly very different responses.".

Examining just one of Ramsay's set of responses (1976b:694) also illustrates another severe limitation of the method. If one asks for the meaning in practical terms of the statements that, for example, 14% of the workers had "quite a lot" of "influence" in the "organisation" of their "own work" as opposed to 32% who had "some", it is difficult to go beyond merely reiterating the mechanical process of how the questionnaire was completed. Ramsay appears to be sensitive to this and can therefore only draw conclusions at a most generalised level.

The problem is that there is an ambivalence about questionnaires. At the same time as enabling sense to be obtained from a confusing mass of individual inclinations, they present a barrier between the real data, which <u>is</u> the confusing mass of individual inclinations, and the analysis. Questionnaire data is not original data, but data that has been filtered and categorised. Partridge (1976:12) confirms that:

> "The assumption that .... attitudes can be articulated in one of a limited range of standardised forms in the course of a fixed choice questionnaire strains the credibility of such findings. If on the contrary it is assumed that such values are ambiguous or only partly articulated then such a research method is biased towards collecting the conventional responses which give little or no indication of how strongly such opinions are held, how

> consistent they are with other opinions held or how they relate to action in any specific context. Such an approach is more likely to tap the social values which legitimise action than those which determine it." (p 14).

Conventional approaches to industrial relations also tend to ignore their dynamism and are heavily weighted towards an implication that workplace relations are static, to the detriment of considerations of the significance of change and of unpredictability. This lapse has applied not only to the individuals involved in the industrial relations system but to the system itself and to the organisations within which it is located. There is often an inference that there is a clear managerial structure and that the decision-making procedure is equally-readily apparent, when in fact there is little evidence to support that this is the case.

Anslem Strauss is aware of the confusing practicality of decision-making and is able to encapsulate it within a world that might be recognisable to participants in industrial relations:

> "Such generalized processes as role taking, 'verstehen' (understanding), or the kinds of rational processes itemized under decision making scarcely give the flavor of what 'really' happens when people are working or living in organisations. What happens involves negotiation, but it also involves coercion, threats of coercion, attempts to persuade, and appeals to authority. The appearances of those processes and their relationships are certainly not fortuitous." (1978:105,106).

Unfortunately, it is true that much of the industrial relations literature fails to convey a feel for its day-to-day reality and the processes that Strauss identifies were certainly evident in the industrial relations behaviour in Llandough Hospital before the research began.

Furthermore, with these few words Strauss also provides another component of the context that is often missing when participation comes under scrutiny, which is a sense of proportion. Participation requires time and energy from all those it concerns and if it can achieve the ambitious aims of staff or management or both that many writers imply it can, one would anticipate that it would attract one of the highest priorities as a call upon these resources. What Strauss succeeds in doing is conveying a sense of participation's place amongst all the other processes that are competing with it and an awareness that in reality its priority may be substantially diminished. Identifying the true significance of participation amongst all the other industrial relations processes was one of the objectives featured in the original research intention and it was one which was not lost sight of during the remainder of the research.

Therefore, both by a process of implicit elimination and an intuitive sense of what was right, the original statement of the research method emphasised a desire to obtain the perceptions of others and to do so largely by interviews. I subsequently realised that in other words I was confirming Mangham's (1978:10) contention that:

> "What is needed is an alternative or complimentary conceptual scheme which acknowledges the central importance of the actors' interpretation of events and situations, and an alternative or complimentary methodology which acknowledges the nature of research into social as opposed to physical reality and which is concerned with the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspect of that reality.".

At the time, I was unaware that what I was proposing was in fact qualitative research and that what I was hoping to achieve was analysis 'grounded' (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in my data; I simply wished to understand the industrial relations world and participation's

place in it as perceived by others involved in industrial relations and could think of no better way of doing this than of allowing them to convey it to me as accurately as possible in person.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is not simply another means of deriving the research data. It is the research method derived from certain assumptions about the way that human behaviour can be characterised, such as that described by symbolic interactionism (Blumer) or social interactionism (Mangham); the data it generates is not the same as that produced by other research methods; and the purpose of the data is also different. The very fact that the method is specific to the study of human behaviour immediately differentiates it from positivistic approaches to research, which advocate that the same scientific method can be used regardless of discipline. Positivism seeks to use precise analysis to test propositional knowledge so that universal predictions of social conduct may be obtained. In contrast, "Blumer strives simply 'to make modern society intelligible,'" (Meltzer et al 1975:57) and qualitative research seeks more to discover ideas, which may then provide relevant understanding. An important means of achieving this is the use of 'sensitising concepts', concepts that should make one sensitive to the task of, "working with and through the distinctive nature of the empirical instance, instead of casting the unique nature aside" (Blumer 1954:8).

But while qualitative research not only accommodates the ideographic, the idiosyncratic and the unique but regards them as central features of the data, this does not mean that it is simply

concerned with describing and collecting the entirely subjective and anecdotal. It is about relating the individual to the world or organisation around them and the mediating factors working in both directions between the two and therefore it is about generating theory from what should be the most direct and accurate data. In Mangham's words (1978:15):

> "An empirical science is not to be brought into being by endless debate and disputation about concepts with the weakest of empirical referents; it is constructed out of the interplay of data and speculation that generates the concepts and at the same time *grounds* them in a context of empirical materials.".

Mangham's own idiosyncrasy is the cult of a dramaturgically informed analysis, which is a qualitative approach with a rather tested theatrical analogy and he declares that,

> "Such an analysis is very difficult to undertake at a distance or by a means of questionnaires and structured interviews." (p 88).

In summary:

> "organisations are to be understood in terms of the individuals who participate in them and individuals are to be understood in terms of the organisations of which they are members. Such 'understanding' can only arise from an intimate familiarity with the processes occurring within organisations, a familiarity which is at the heart of qualititive research which aims to go beyond the ideographic without doing violence to the complexity of its subject matter." (p 18).

These thoughts are detailed here not because they shaped the development of the thesis research methodology (terms such as qualitative research, interactionism and positivism were actually not known before the research began) but because they articulate the implicit choices that were made when the outline research intent was prepared. The naive enthusiasm for this approach was also subsequently tempered by an increasing awareness that, while a qualitative approach was still the most appropriate, it had flaws that would need to be

addressed. Meltzer et al (1975:59) summarise some of the criticisms:

> "These techniques are subjective and, hence, unsuited to the development of scientific knowledge; information gathered through their use is too variable and unique for comparison and generalization; they tend to be too time-consuming for convenient use; it is not known how we can teach the subtle skills required in their use; and they do not, typically, lend themselves to the conventional testing of explicitly formulated theories by procedures subject to independent validation.".

Concern about these problems is shared and to some extent borne out in the description by Armstrong et al (1981) of their own empirical, qualitative research, but they are self-depricating to a degree that reveals just how nebulous the standards are by which they judge themselves. They certainly confirm that the approach can be immensely time-consuming. In their study researchers worked five-day weeks of shifts in each of four factories over a continuous period of four months. Neither can the authors prove that their subjectivity and level of skill did not significantly affect the research outcome. They state frankly that, "All that can be said is that the researchers were aware of these limitations and have sought to overcome them." (p 28).

What must be challenged, however, is their admission that one of the well-known limitations that their work suffers from is that, "the studies are of particular factories, and this obviously limits claims to typicality.". The challenge is immediate and obvious. How can a claim to typicality be expanded? There is not one single enterprise which could be studied on the basis that it is 'typical' of all, or a group of, enterprises and it is not feasible to devise a sufficiently diverse selection of organisations that could be regarded as typically representative, and even if it was attempted and an approximation

achieved it would only derive a compound typicality. This is qualitative research that still cannot abandon the criteria of value of positivistic research.

It is unrealistic to seek universal laws of organisational behaviour and Walker (1977:1) acknowledges this specifically in the context of research into participation:

> "Further progress is required in clarifying the causal relations involved in participation, ... It is time to abandon global thinking about participation and move to a more discriminating approach which does not seek final solutions but recognises that participation is a living, evolving process, the outcome of which cannot be predicted in detail.".

This sentiment was applied far more comprehensively by Lord Rothschild in his 'Report on the Social Science Research Council' (reported in The Times 16.7.82.). One of his conclusions was that, "even the work commonly described as 'applied' social science research is directed towards an 'end-product' only in a metaphorical sense .... The main purpose of applied social research is to provide the material on which it may be possible to conduct a more informed debate and make better decisions.". It is unreasonable, the report seems to be confirming, to expect applied social research to produce hard facts, verifiable hypotheses or quantifiable dependent variables of human organisation.

The qualitative methodology implicitly appropriated in the original thesis research design is doubly fertile. It is adventurous and involves risk-taking, but if it is successful it generates both further data about the complexity of social interaction and the themes that pattern its vitality. The work of Terry (1977) provides an excellent example. From three detailed case studies of the entire

range of shop floor industrial relations activity, including, for instance, anecdotal evidence about incidents of lateness, Terry has both added to the body of knowledge about the dynamics of workplace industrial relations and derived an analysis of the significance of informality that combines theoretical and practical value. As Berg affirms (1979:271):

> "describing the process of change in qualitative rather than quantitative terms and in wholes, rather than in parts, enables us to see and explain activities and events that would otherwise have been difficult to grasp.".

Partridge (1977:41,42) illustrates that one of the positive advantages of quantitative research is its great concentration upon the subjective and unique. Ramsay (1977:498) comments that:

> "it is precisely at the level of individual experiments, gaining information on the perceptions and expectations of those involved in them, that further research can greatly clarify the detailed processes at work.".

But the worth of case studies as tools of analysis has yet to be adequately established. Part of the dilemma appears to be that even those researchers who have produced case studies are uncertain of the criteria by which their validity should be judged. Armstrong et al have already been noted to be apologetic for the limitations upon generalising from case studies and Partridge too, in another study, generates a plethora of validation problems when expressing reservations about his methodology. He describes three case histories and then declares that (1976:26):

> "Unfortunately not enough incidents occurred during the course of the study to test any overall pattern. However, these few examples demonstrate some general features about defining and articulating 'the grievance'.".

Once again, questions must be thrown back. How many incidents would have been enough? What criteria should be used for 'testing'? What

constitutes a 'pattern'? Are the features really 'general' or are they in fact specific to a certain context, or just three contexts at the most? In addition, Partridge's summary of his study raises questions about the purpose of qualitative research. "This paper has highlighted four facets which the steward should ideally take into account when defining a grievance." (p 35), he states, but without explanation he has moved from description to prescription and interjected a value judgement of uncertain origin.

In a skilled exposition of the value of the case study approach, Berg (1979) resolves many of these types of concern. His attitude is that (p 265):

> "findings derived from the study of one case do not easily lend themselves to validation in a traditional sense, and this has been one of the major criticisms of the case method as such. This does not mean that the theories cannot be judged, but rather that the validation must take a different form, oriented more to the credibility of the research process.".

He reasons that the relationship between the research method and the analysis can be examined on three different levels, by the accuracy of the case description, the credibility of the interpretation and the validity of the theoretical framework. This logical dissection of the accuracy of the research process is continued in the guidance about how to assess the accuracy of the case description:

> "First, the case study can be correct in the sense that the activities and events that are accounted for not only took place, but took place at the time and in the manner described. Second, the description of the meaning ascribed by various actors to activities and events can be a fair description of what they try to convey in the interview, or of what I was able to extract from the written documentation." (p 265).

In his own research, Berg established an elaborate control system for maintaining the first category of accuracy. The data was checked and then double-checked, clarification of previous statements was

sought, further documentation was requested and two feedback seminars were organised. This last method is regarded by Berg as one of the most important control mechanisms. However, he recognises that the second type of accuracy is far more difficult to measure. It apparently depends upon the participants' assessment of what has been derived and Berg is only able to comment (p 266) that, in his own work, "no criticism was forthcoming .... of the description of the viewpoints of the different actors and groups.".

When addressing the issue of how the findings from case studies can be transferred to other organisations and situations, Berg confirms that there appears to be general agreement that case studies can be used to generate theoretical frameworks, but is still anxious to emphasise the value of the individual character of the organisation he studied. This is a reiteration of one of the basic tenets of qualitative research, which is that it is about generating data about what 'really' goes on, which in turn often means focusing upon the particular, the unique, the idiosyncratic and the distinctive. It does not attempt to obtain typicality, or representation, or to identify the behaviour of one variable while all others are kept constant. But ironically and conversely, it is also more concerned with the creative act of producing theory rather than with the almost mechanical act of testing hypotheses. Case studies may do no more than describe, analyse and explain specific contexts, which is itself no mean feat, but each one of them is also a potential catalyst for the derivation of theory.

Nonetheless, this process causes concern to many commentators, largely because there is no intervening, seemingly objective analytic

tool between the data and the researcher. There can be no comparisons of answers to standard, identical tests; it is impossible to present tables of findings; there are no figures that can be statistically manipulated to obtain tests of significance; and so on. Those who are sceptical about the method can emphasise the number of different levels in which the researcher is personally involved and which can therefore be subject to grossly distorting error. In some of the qualitative research processes, such as interviewing, the researcher is actually responsible for creating the data and then, whatever the process, the researcher exercises judgement about how to divide the data available into that which is relevant to the study and that which is not. Further judgement is exercised in deciding how the relevant data should be structured, associated, sequenced and weighted. And ultimately, any theory that is produced is that which, in the researcher's opinion, appears to most accurately reflect the circumstances being studied.

This does not mean the method is invalid, or worse than positivism, and neither does it even mean that the researcher must do their best to minimise these influences, which will be considered further later. At a simple level, some of the alleged weaknesses can be met by arguments that subjectivity is always present, whatever the research design, and that most researchers take notice if study 'subjects' say something interesting and informative.

The work of Wall and Lischeron (1977) illustrates both. They describe that their approach included a concern with "scientific rigour", but they admit that:

> "Sometimes the constraints inherent in the work situation were such that we could not gather the evidence in the objective way which we felt would be most compatible with the scientific aims of our study. At other times our scientific requirements served to inhibit the documentation of evidence which, whilst of considerable practical relevance, was not easily available through the methods of data collection we had chosen, or which was not covered by the questions we had initially set out to answer. In these cases we relied upon our own observations and interpretations of the situation which we obtained through our extensive contact with all those concerned with the research - workers, supervisors, trade union officials and managers alike." (p 9).

At a higher level of generality, those who criticise qualitative research for its subjectivity appear to be unaware of the dichotomous approach they appear to be advocating towards the study of the way in which individuals behave in groups and organisations. They are attempting to analyse the processes of social or symbolic interaction while subjecting themselves to the deceipt that they can somehow remove themselves from the very things they are studying. If there is an appreciation that there is an interaction between the research and the researched, there may be an attempt to eliminate or at least minimise the impact the interaction has upon the research objective. This, too, perpetuates a fallacy, which is the widely-held, tacit assumption that the quantity of interaction is closely correlated with the strength of interaction. The very act of initiating research creates an interaction and attempts to formally eliminate it may merely mean that its nature and consequences take another form.

Friedlander (1968) is one of those who has recognised that a relationship exists between the research and the researched, regardless of the method used, and that attempts to eliminate its effects will only produce their displacement. This applies to any behavioural research and Friedlander explains that the purpose of his paper is:

> "to explore the quality of the research results and of the ongoing researcher/subject relationship as a function of the interacting needs and perceptions of both parties in the sequence of transactions within this relationship." (p 369).

He reminds us of experimental studies that have manifest the force of the pressures upon research subjects to be obedient and to meet the researcher's perceived wishes:

> "the limited but important research in this area indicates that supposedly inert subjects go to great lengths to be obedient, co-operative, 'good subjects', thereby exhibiting behavior which is irrational and out of the context of the rules of the experimental situation.
> These issues are not restricted to any one set of methodologies, values, or philosophies, but are endemic to all endeavors in which the purpose is to study human behavior." (p 370).

Subjectivity will be apparent in any research design and the greater the 'objectivity' that it seeks to achieve the greater the restrictions will be upon the subject's responses and the artificiality of the data obtained:

> "Objectivity then takes the form of more austere constraints upon the responses of subjects or of attempts to neutralize spurious background and situational factors. These measures are intended to ensure that the subjects will not respond freely to the experimental situation or to the experimenter. That is, they will not respond in a way which encompasses natural human relationships and environmental presses." (p 371).

Thus research methods which seek to avoid the biases of subjectivity themselves produced data, and consequently interpretation, which is distorted, just as much influenced by the researcher and possibly more so, and often consistent only with circumstances that are so esoteric that is to make them virtually worthless. This is because, as Friedlander summarises:

> "To varying extents, fragmentation, standardization, and neutralization techniques reduce the potential capacity of the communication and feedback channels between researcher and subject, bias it with two-way distrust, and reduce opportunities for further understanding in the relationship." (p 371).

Qualitative research techniques seek to minimise not the interaction but the communication interference between the conceptual or practical issue that is the subject of the study and the data that the researcher obtains about it. Although it may be academically naive, the study of social behaviour by simply watching it and receiving the participants' opinions about it, has justifiable appeal. Friedlander refers to, "The rich understanding and knowledge that we might gain" if we do not, "exclude the subject from explorations and implementations meaningful to him." (p 376). Indeed, since social interaction is not an abstract construct such as mathematics, the very definition of the research topic and the desciption of its contents must be in terms of what is seen and heard. Many studies confirm that the results of qualitative research are of a greatly superior calibre than that of quantitative research, both in terms of the accuracy with which the data reflects the issue under study and the power it provides to generate insight.

Simple examples exist within the specific context of research into participation. Cressey et al (1981) used both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The first produced paradoxes about attitudes to participation, so they report that (p 120):

> "It was therefore to the qualitative material that we turned in search of a clue to understanding these paradoxes. The effort put into the survey to gain qualitative information on respondants' perceptions of industrial democracy and participation paid dividends in that we discovered more useful information about the frames of reference of managers and representatives in their approach to their subject.".

Similarly, Marchington (1980) used unstructured, spontaneous interviews and discussions and confirms that this produced data of a totally different value:

> "It was during such sessions that I became more aware of the intricacies of the Plan, and industrial relations management in general, and more critical of the traditional reliance that researchers place on questionnaires of relatively standardised interviews; the richness of the data gathered by 'living within a culture' is so much greater." (p 182).

Qualitative research's obsession with discovering 'reality' by using methods that do not seek to standardise the data is illustrated in another study, by Dowling et al (1981:186):

> "Prior to discussing the subjects with respondents we were of course conscious of the variety of meanings and interpretations which people place on the terms 'employee participation' and 'industrial democracy'. Neither term has a precise and established meaning, and we did not direct the discussions around any strict definitions of these terms. We wanted respondents to talk about the subjects 'in their own words', and from their accounts we hoped to gain impressions of *their* conceptions of, and thinking about, this important area of industrial relations.".

While this type of enquiry is the very crux of qualitative research, it also presents a very real methodological dilemma, particularly in interviews between the researcher and respondent. The propensity of respondents to conform may be just as strong in qualitative research as in quantitative and considerable skill is required to avoid the presentation of opportunities to respondents to perceive what they may regard as cues to expected responses. Cressey et al (1981:117) touch upon this problem and also reiterate that other, quantitative methods may be more inaccurate:

> "We wished to develop a greater understanding of the nature of attitudes to the subject. We were acutely aware of problems posed by the variety of ideas, definitions and terms used by those we were researching. We therefore paid considerable attention to the use of open-ended questions and qualitative data designed to explore respondents' interpretations of the subject in greater detail than a fixed choice attitude survey can reveal.".

Unfortunately, the sensitivities and skills that qualitative researchers require when interviewing are much more complex than those of remembering to ask open-ended questions. The process is also more complicated than that of personnel selection interviews. Before the interviews, for example, the respondents will need to know how they have been selected, what the subject of the interviews will be, how the information will be used and what authority he has obtained to allow the interviews to proceed. The researcher then needs to adequately consider the implications of where the interview is held, since some locations will be more conducive to informal discussion than others but different locations will also attract a range of associations in the respondent's mind. During the interviews, the orthodox range of interviewing skills will certainly be required, but supplementary abilities will also be necessary. Respondents must be put at their ease, they must be helped to understand that there are no right and wrong answers, the questions should indeed be open-ended and largely value-free and the degree of conversational flow should be much greater than that obtained even in selection interviews, in which all participants appreciate that the process should flow but in essence consist of questions and answers.

Two major dilemmas remain - how to avoid linguistic imperialism and superficiality. The first may sound melodramatic but accurately conveys the process by which the conceptual understanding and articulation of respondents can be swept aside by the respondents' acquiescence to the use of the researcher's terms and meanings. This may be easily done and it defeats the object of the exercise. Researchers may assume that the core of the major conceptual understandings are common and that they are therefore only concerned with

the interpretations at the margin, or they may simply assume a shared sense of meaning about common concepts. In addition, during the course of the interviews they may find themselves subconsciously more comfortable when respondents refer to terms or concepts with which they are familiar and so provide reinforcement for these issues to be elaborated and concentrated upon, rather than those which appear to be disjunctive to a researcher's frame of reference.

Armstrong et al are well aware of the impact of linguistics in qualitative research and draw attention to the likelihood that within the field of industrial relations they are not neutral but biased, and researchers may unwittingly perpetuate this in their interviews:

> "Whilst .... there are linguistic resources available to workers, those available to managers perhaps predominate. After all, if the presuppositions of the dominant ideology favour the interests of capital and management, it is scarcely a matter for surprise that the same should be true of language." (1981:160).

However, if there is an explicit awareness of it there is much that can be done to reduce linguistic distortion. Researchers can, for example, use vague and general phrases and in return gain an appreciation of the terms and understandings that the respondents attach to them. In fact, one of the more important requirements of a qualitative researcher in an interview is to be able to rapidly discern at its outset the terminology and phrasing that the respondent uses and feels comfortable with in exchange. This is not impossible but it is certainly an indication of the much more demanding and complex interpersonal skills required of qualitative researchers rather than those using quantitative methods.

Even with an awareness of this requirement and some experience of using the appropriate techniques, it is still possible to have

lapses. Towards the end of the research period I made arrangements to discuss with the Chairman of the NUPE branch and the portering shop steward a possible disciplinary problem with one of the porters. During the course of the discussion, I stated, in what I imagined to be good empathetic style, that the porter was, "hypothetically putting two fingers up to management". I thought nothing more of this until two days later when the Head Porter explained to me that the NUPE shop steward had passed this comment on to the porter in question who had instantly rushed around to see the Deputy Head Porter, to deny that he had ever put two fingers up to a member of management and demanded to know who had made the accusation. Since the Deputy Head Porter had not been involved he had to contact the NUPE shop steward to find out how this reference had been made. The shop steward confirmed that he had told the porter that I had said that he had put two fingers up to management. He also explained that he had not told the porter that I had said he was doing this hypothetically, because the shop steward did not know what the word meant.

The objectives of the qualitative researcher, gained through this great assortment of procedural sensitivities and interpersonal skills, are distinguished particularly clearly by both Mangham and Blumer. The first identifies that, "Only by close attention, by deep immersion in his material, can the observer hope to apprehend the nature of particular situational scripts." (1978:88). Blumer advocates a special methodology that:

> "lays heavy stress upon the need for insightfully 'feeling one's way inside the experience of the actor'. The student of human conduct, he contends, must get inside the actor's world and must see the world as the actor sees it, for the actor's behavior takes place on the basis of his/her own particular meanings. Through some form of sympathetic introspection, the student must

> take the standpoint of the acting unit (person or group) whose behavior he/she is studying and must attempt to use each actor's own categories in capturing that actor's world of meaning." (Meltzer et al 1975:57,58).

Mangham's emphasis, in the context of the work of organisational development consultants, is more practical:

> "His behaviour should be such as to cast others into behaving 'normally', performing their scripts with little regard for him. During interviews his altercasting and self-presentation should be such as to facilitate the client's exposition and exploration of issues. Such behaviour is facilitated by the skills of the consultant in displaying empathy, showing that he is able to come close to seeing things the way that the client sees them - showing, that is, that he can accurately take the role of the other, displaying overtly the mental processes of interpretation and reflecting to the client what he takes the client to be saying." (1978:135).

Such sentiments are entirely laudible but must be bound by two conditions. The first, widely acknowledged, is that there are practical limitations to the degree of assimilation that can be achieved between the researcher and researched, and the second is that the easy option of achieving close affiliation by dwelling only on the superficial must be avoided. Mangham recognises both of these:

> "It is impossible to become completely identified with the perspective of particular social actors, but it is possible to seek to understand what features the actor takes into account in forming his action and, by interview and observation, to make some preliminary assessment of the nature of his previous dispositions and the likelihood that he will seek to perform certain parts rather than others." (p 88).

If obtaining understanding and assessment is to be feasible it will rarely be sufficient to take all the statements of a respondent at face value. They may conceal, for example, that the respondent has never previously considered the issue that they have been asked to respond to or that the genuine origin of an opinion or attitude

is emotional rather than rational. The justification of opinion is generally more revealing than the opinion itself and can furthermore assist in verifying whether the opinions expressed are genuine or facades for what the respondent perceives the researcher to expect or which the respondent feels obliged to project as a consequence of their position in the social network e.g. as a shop steward. Qualitative research interviews therefore require an element of probing and challenging but of course the process is as delicate as glass-blowing. If too much effort is exerted, nothing will be achieved. Respondents must not be made to feel inhibited because of the fear that they will be required to justify anything they say, with an intellectual rigour. Many attitudes are held with nothing to substantiate them but their derivation and the motivating force they provide can still be of enormous significance. The balance to be obtained, as Mangham (1978:137) describes it, is that:

> "the interventionists must employ a judicious mix of confronting and supporting behaviour. Too much confrontation, too sharp an encounter with threatening material, may bring about a retreat; too much support may lead to a cosy collusion to avoid any meaningful exploration.".

Surprisingly perhaps, the combination of undertaking qualitative research and as an internal researcher meant that this element of tension was probably the greatest source of creativity in the whole research process. The special characteristics of acting as an internal researcher will be discussed in further detail but it is worth noting here that "judicious" challenging did not renew the management/representative divide sometimes evident in the day-to-day industrial relations, as many might have anticipated, but in fact encouraged the representatives to be honest and frank since they knew that posturing would be recognised and confronted, and it also

meant that the representatives could not conceal themselves behind organisational stances or slogans.

Nevertheless, qualitative research requires its practitioners to make personal judgements at all stages of the research process and to exercise highly sophisticated interpersonal skills and yet it appears impossible to establish by what criteria and with what degree of skill these tasks were undertaken. With this ignorance it appears impossible to know with what confidence one can regard the research outcome. In fact, although the validity of qualitative methods is still not established whole-heartedly, there are a number of ready defences.

To begin with, as some of the previous discussion has noted, the validity of much, allegedly methodologically superior, quantitative work is itself highly dubious. To suggest that the study of human behaviour is amenable to scientific methods is to assert sweeping a priori assumptions about human behaviour, both generally and in the context of the study, most of which are never made explicit. These assumptions may therefore not be assessed but if unreasonable they may substantially invalidate the subsequent data. This in turn means that the very criteria by which quantitative research assesses its validity may be invalid. This is because they are grounded in an abstract research design rather than the subjects under enquiry. Recognition has also already been made the way in which deriving and marshalling data by quantitative techniques can substantially distort it and introduce the researcher's subjectivity. Neither, as most quantitative techniques seem to assume, can the relationship between the researcher and subject and its consequences be eliminated from

the study. If it maintains the discipline of its internal logic its ambitions are extremely limited. It can only produce a series of statements about how individual 'variables' react in certain very specific circumstances. The most it can suggest is that the same reaction of the variable will be achieved under the same circumstances, but even replicated 'experiments' have often failed to duplicate the findings of previous, supposedly identical studies. Finally, more broadly based researchers who do not feel absolutely bound by the logic of the scientific method are prepared to admit that the most fertile data and that which provides the greatest insight is obtained by qualitative methods.

Conversely, some qualitative researchers have felt obliged to validate their studies in almost quantitative terms when in fact it is quite reasonable to propose that the validity of qualitative data may be legitimately assessed by other criteria. The contentious concerns are exactly what criteria these should be and what methods are available by which a particular study can be assessed against them. A number of proposed criteria have already been referred to. In general terms, they are inevitably vague but central considerations would be whether the research participants confirm the accuracy of the research data; whether the researcher's subjectivity was used creatively and enlighteningly or in a way that produced restriction and distortion; whether the researcher's method and skills elicited the highest quality research data in the particular research context; whether the data manages to convey a sense that what was being studied was 'real life', in all its vitality, inconsistency, peculiarities, uneventfulness and so on; whether the researcher is able to obtain an analysis of the data presented from which he can derive an

explanation of it that is at least reasonably consistent with the data; and whether the data and researcher have been able to generate insight that may be of value to researchers and practitioners in other contexts.

Such criteria are obviously not capable of 'objective' or quantitative assessment and much will therefore depend upon the subjective orientation towards the research of those wishing to evaluate it. They will need to exercise their own judgement to decide, for example, whether there is adequate data, whether it conveys a 'feel' of the organisation being studied and whether the insights are of more extensive value. This assessment is considerably facilitated, however, if the evaluator has some confirmation of the rigour with which the method was employed. The quality of the data may speak for itself but otherwise, or in support, it is important that those not party to the research process are informed of the researcher's propensities, have an indication of the level of skills displayed and are aware of the major judgements that were made and the reasons for them. This is emphasised by Berg (1979:265):

> "The task of the researcher is therefore not to show whether his findings, models or hypotheses are right or wrong, but to convince the reader that they are reasonable conclusions, drawn from a material, which has been processed by methods which can be explicitly described.".

But ultimately one has to recognise that in research into social interaction one can do no more than sub-optimise the validity. As Batstone et al (1977:17) recognise:

> "Our understanding is far from total and in some cases we cannot provide convincing proof of our statements. But absolute proof is an impossibility in sociology. We can claim, however, that we gave the actors the courtesy of letting them explain things in their own terms, and seriously attempted to understand both their statements and their actions. .... From what they taught us we have attempted to develop a more general analysis. The

result does not totally explain the situations we observed - far from it.".

The existence of inadequacies and vagueness such as these authors describe, and indeed even the presentation of research data that requires these limitations to be declared, would be anathema to quantitative researchers, but it is possible to maintain a healthy sense of proportion. In reporting the retirement of Mr Michael Posner as the Chairman of the Social Science Research Council, Hennessy (1983) reports that:

"He likes to tell a morality story, the authorship of which he attributed to Sir Hermann Bondi, the former chief scientific advisor at the Ministry of Defence.
'If God applied for a research grant he would be turned down on the grounds that his last public work was a long time ago, that it was in book form rather than a refereed journal, and the persistent attempts to replicate his results had been disappointed.'".

The Internal Researcher

"Academic research in fields such as management or industrial relations is often deprecated as having little practical relevance to real world problems. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is well aware of such criticism, and runs a scheme which throws back a challenge to industry. Their 'Open Door' scheme finances research into topics selected by practising managers, professional institutes and trade unionists.".

This report in Personnel Management (February 1982:21) continues:

"The idea of the scheme is to involve potential users of research at a stage when research proposals are formulated. In this way, research projects acquire more immediate relevance to their needs and concerns. Researchers, for their part, are given unusually good access to data and are brought into a closer and more fruitful relationship with the world of practice.".

Mangham sympathises but anticipates a problem:

"Ian Mangham advocates as the way ahead a form of collaborative action research which might enhance mutual learning and provide benefits to organisations and to organisational psychology. However he asserts pessimistically that 'few of those who purport to be organisational psychologists have anything to return for access and few of those who have something to offer have

> interests in the development of organisational psychology'." (Guest 1982).

Warr and Wall (1975:preface) identify the same symptoms but recommend a different remedy:

> "Our own professional activities as research and development workers in applied psychology makes quite clear the difficulties of bridging the gap between theory and practice. The day-to-day requirements of meeting production targets, avoiding backlogs or reducing expenditure are very pressing. So too are the traditional ways of thinking and feeling which characterise managements, trade unions and individual employees. These various factors are typically in multiple conflict with each other, leading to immense difficulties in the introduction of change. The research worker needs to become more involved in these ongoing practical problems if his impact is to be widespread. This means a greater emphasis on what has been called 'action research', extending sometimes into development studies whose emphasis on innovation perhaps justifies the label 'research action'.".

But of course there is an alternative, or rather a complimentary arrangement, that can also bridge the gap. Those involved in the "ongoing practical problems" can become more involved in research and this raises the possibility that the practitioner who becomes involved in research can arrive at the same point on the theory/practice spectrum as the researcher who becomes involved in action. Their origins, however, will still substantially differentiate their effectiveness. The external researcher may be able to provide greater innovative thought and stimulus for change but the level of acceptance and commitment to maintaining the change may rapidly diminish once he disassociates himself from the organisation. The internal researcher may experience the very opposite difficulty, which is that the consequences of his research may be theoretically more restricted but possibly more realistic and therefore attractive to others within the organisation and this in turn may generate expectations that the researcher personally may have to accommodate

because of his continued presence in the organisation.

Elden (1977:2,3) suggests that participation experiments in Norway did not succeed as anticipated because of the restricted effectiveness of external agents:

> "Researchers were heavily involved in diagnosing problems, suggesting alternatives, running interference, and in generally managing the change process in the early experiments. The theory is that such a heavy involvement by outside 'experts' may have impeded the people themselves from taking initiative and responsibility and learning how to manage the change process itself independent of the researchers and other specialists. Ironically, the very role of researcher as 'expert-in-charge-of-change' may have contributed both to the success of the demonstration phase and to the failure of the diffusion phase.".

Of course, another crucial handicap of external research is that it has no chance of being of value unless the researchers are able to effectively sensitise themselves to the research context. Armstrong et al describe how they overcame this by extensive and taxing periods of observation and explain that (1981:21):

> "This approach was adopted partly to overcome the 'distance' experienced in some casework when the researcher attends intermittently and risks achieving a status no higher than that of occasional visitor in the eyes of those he is studying.".

As one who had the power to initiate change and who was at the core of industrial relations activity my research was unlikely to attract these deficiencies. Because I was part of the research context and had a central role within it I had an immediate awareness of much about the organisation that had an important bearing upon the research and yet would barely come to the attention of an external researcher. Not only did I know what the formal relationships were, such as the organisational structure, nature of different staff duties, and formal inter-relationships, but also I had an awareness of the identity and nature of the relationships and processes that were

significant in practice, an understanding of the place of the informal in the organisation and a sensitivity to, and knowledge of, some specific organisational problems.

This does not mean that no element of 'distance' was experienced. Even as an internal researcher I sometimes found it difficult to be aware of how different departments ticked and to demonstrate a sensitivity for the culture of a particular workgroup. There were also times when preconceived images of the organisation of other departments were applied inappropriately. For example, in the interview with one of the ASTMS stewards I referred to 'supervisors' several times and while the concept may be identifiable in the pathology laboratories, the word itself is never used. I was still employing the language and organisational elements which had occurred in the previous interviews, which were all with ancillary shop stewards. Nevertheless, the example demonstrates that, if even as an internal researcher I found it difficult to project an understanding of the organisation of the work-group, it must be an overwhelmingly difficult task for an independent researcher to demonstrate organisational empathy, with correspondingly far more certain and significant effects upon the quantity, quality and accuracy of the data.

There can also be no doubt that as an internal researcher I was far less gullible. On numerous occasions, the shop stewards and staff representatives made statements that I knew were completely inconsistent with the people involved or with incidents that had occurred, and not only additional data but data of a much richer quality was obtained by articulating this awareness and, in an unthreatening manner, compelling the representatives to analyse the

inconsistency. This was particularly pertinent when it was obvious to me that the representatives were projecting an image, giving a presentation, of their reasonableness, which management abused to produce industrial relations problems. Good-natured probing of such statements confirmed that there were indeed occasions when the representatives and staff genuinely perceived management to be unreasonable but also revealed far more of the reality of the attitudes and positions presented in industrial relations.

A hint of the much more profound insight available to an internal as opposed to an external researcher is possible in the Llandough research context because, by coincidence, during the course of the thesis research a postgraduate student from a university Department of Industrial Relations and Management Studies undertook a project in the catering department as part of his Ph.D. research. He gave the hospital a copy of his report (Rose 1981). After describing his first impressions of the kitchen he asks:

> "How was I, as a student of industrial relations, to make any sense of all this, let alone discover anything to do with my real interest? I was there to study the managerial control of work and the way in which employees respond to this, but first I had to understand what was going on in front of me.".

The bulk of the report conveys what he learned about the daily activity cycle of the kitchens in Llandough and another hospital, but then he comments:

> "From an industrial relations point of view both kitchens were on the whole uneventful. Strikes and other forms of industrial action, such as working to rule, are virtually unknown.".

He refers to the national organisation of negotiation of terms and conditions of service and his assessment is that:

> "At the level of the catering department the residue of employee relations involves the maintenance of certain standards of work and discipline.".

He reports that:

> "Despite the pressure of having to work to a schedule, often understaffed, relations in the kitchens are generally harmonious. Maintaining a good working atmosphere depends upon the actions of supervisors as well as the general working conditions. However it must be said that a situation of apparent day-to-day co-operation does not automatically imply positive satisfaction and should never be taken for granted. It is always possible that a kind of passive acceptance exists as expressed in comments about work like, 'There are worse places'.".

He concludes that:

> "Overall the staff in both kitchens could be described as non-militant. Some of the reasons for this are probably to be found in the general level of satisfaction with the money and conditions of work. It may also be that, as was suggested in one kitchen, they were non-militant from the top down. Nevertheless, as I have suggested, such a state of affairs should never be seen as automatic and taken for granted.".

This account contrasts starkly with that obtained in the thesis research interview with the catering shop steward. She reveals a department with strong tensions among its staff, and particularly with those who are regarded as not pulling their weight, with numerous niggles that have apparently no opportunity to be heard let alone resolved, with serious criticisms of and differences with the NUPE branch officers, and with some of the more obvious examples of the way in which staff can informally usurp the managerial control of work, which was, after all, Rose's main research concern.

The claim that internal researchers can obtain the most incisive data may be countered by allegations that it is also much more likely to be affected by the researcher's subjectivity and to inhibit the research participants, with whom the researcher has a non-research relationship which may be part of the subject of the research. Hyman

(1977:preface) is critical about the necessity to have regard for the influence of subjectivity:

> "It is virtually obligatory for any academic writing on an acutely controversial topic to make ritual genuflections in the direction of objectivity. I am sceptical of such moralistics.".

Recognition has already been made that an element of subjectivity is almost inevitable in any research process, whether qualitative or quantitative, and Hyman's concern is simply that it should be made explicit.

As an internal researcher, this is largely self-evident but every effort has also been made in the preparation of the thesis to be scrupulously honest and open about the preconceptions, most of which were naturally managerially-orientated, that I have brought to the study. I quickly became conscious, for example, that when refering to 'strength' in workplace industrial relations I used the word 'authority' if it was managerial and 'power' if it was associated with a trade union. This suggested a very obvious subjective discrimination. Authority has connotations of 'rightness', tradition, accepted superiority, and obedience based upon respect and not on strength, whereas power suggests aggression, self-interest and the success of force over reason. This in turn implied that I possessed my own sense of what constituted the 'natural order'. Some researchers might regard such an admission as totally debilitating when in fact it more resembles a research cathartic. All researchers possess a set of meanings that they associate with words, which may or may not be shared by those with which they are undertaking the research, but only rarely is this recognised so therefore only rarely can it be accommodated in the evaluation of the data.

Of course I had my own linguistic traits and meanings and my own understandings of order in the world but what was important was that I recognised that these should not interfere with the very same features that I wished to elicit from the research respondents. Some of the methods for doing this have already been described and one of the most important ones was to use terms that were as vague and general as possible. Even more crucial, however, was that when potentially contentious words such as 'authority' and 'power' were used, either by myself or a respondent, I was conscious of the obligation to allow the expression of the respondent's own understandings of such terms, and there were occasions when the use of such words was an important trigger to the elaboration of respondents' attitudes.

Hyman (1977:159) believes that most industrial relations researchers have a management bias anyway. He states that:

> "The intimate attachment between academic research and managerial preoccupations receives powerful ideological and practical support. The use of academic techniques and theories to facilitate managerial manipulation is sanctified by such descriptions as 'a fruitful exercise in applied social science'.".

Bate and Mangham (1981:208) admit to colluding with the senior managers who facilitated their study but deny that they were managerially orientated. They are completely open that they did possess orientations and that they worked to advance the interests of some groups to the disadvantage of others, but the groups they sympathised with varied during the course of their study, from the workers to the supervisors and then to both vis-a-vis management.

In my own mind, the disadvantages of undertaking internal research were heavily outweighed by the advantages and even if it

had been possible an important creative element would have been lost if I had attempted to shed my managerial affiliations. In practice, it was taken as a compliment if during the course of a frank and revealing discussion about their perceptions of industrial relations, a staff representative made explicit reference to my function as an administrator. A simple example arose in response to a question that was put to a NUPE housekeeping shop steward.

Question: Why do you think there should be staff representatives who question what managers do?

Mary: Oh well, lots of these people who are managers have never worked on a floor as such, have they? They don't know about -

Question: What difference does that make?

Mary: Oh come off it. I mean, you've never been a housekeeper then, have you?

But although it was inevitable and fruitful that as a researcher I was still perceived as a manager and that when tape recording, for example, informal negotiations I was accepted as a manager also undertaking research, a sensitivity was essential to ensure that a distinction was maintained between when it was appropriate and condoned that the two roles were blurred and the occasions when the two had to be kept apart, for fear that otherwise the entire research would be jeopardised. This may sound a grave responsibility requiring the exercise of subtlety and skill, but it was not actually a problem because I was able to abide by a cardinal research rule, which was that none of the information received during the research interviews was disclosed to anybody else or seen to make any difference to the current course of day-to-day industrial relations. I was also apparently able to instill a confidence in the representatives that

I was not using the research process as a management tool.

The obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the interviews was a great frustration on occasions, particularly when representatives expressed dissatisfaction about issues which I knew that I could resolve. These largely had to go unheeded, since I did not wish the respondents to begin worrying that they might be talking about the 'wrong' issues, but on one occasion I explicitly agreed with a NUPE shop steward the practical action that I would take in response to the points he had made, but only on the understanding that it was with his consent that I was stepping outside the research context with information received within it, and this worked successfully.

As an internal researcher it was possible that my managerial standing could have inhibited the flow of data from the representatives, but in fact a remarkable degree of candour was forthcoming. They clearly appreciated that the constraint of confidentiality would be maintained, as the following exchanges illustrate. A NALGO representative discussing the union's response to management-initiated changes in hours of work commented that:

> "We've only got two possibilities, you see, really and - I wouldn't say this to you usually - I wouldn't say it if you were management. I wouldn't take this tack, you see. But we've got to show from the regulations .... "

and he continued by describing the tactics that he thought his union ought to adopt. Similarly, one of the NUPE shop stewards was talking about why some of her members had recently left to join COHSE and in particular why they had refused to obey the last strike call, when she suddenly stated, "I don't know if I should be talking about this really, but no, I did ask over that and they wouldn't give an answer." and she continued her analysis of her membership problem.

This second example also touches upon another significant indication of the honesty of the research exchanges, which is the degree to which the representatives were prepared to voice criticism of the trade union organisations. Several of the representatives actually expressed quite strong criticisms of their members and/or other shop stewards and a particular example was provided by a NUPE shop steward who was quite open during at least two points in the interview that she would not take a problem to another, specific branch officer because she thought that he was incompetent. Another indication of the licence which the condition of confidentiality appears to have given the representatives was the vivid contrast between the representatives' energetic and enthusiastic fluency during the interviews and the embarrassing reticence of the great majority of them at the feedback meeting and the belligerence of one of them. The feedback meeting will be discussed in greater detail but it is pertinent at this stage to note that one explanation for this difference was that the representatives did not wish to be associated with information or opinions in a group that they had volunteered individually in interviews.

Undertaking research internally generates another source of emphasis which is different from that in research by external agents, namely that the expectations of those in the research may be altered and heightened. The outcome of the research becomes another influence upon the process of day-to-day industrial relations and Gorz (1970), referred to in Partridge (1976:13), demonstrates how forceful the effect of this can be, even with research undertaken by external agents. He drew attention to:

> "the behaviour of the 'satisfied' Luton workers who went on strike when a copy of Godthorpe et al's analysis attached to a statement of the company's profits was circulated amongst them.".

At the inception of the research process and during its first phases I was willing to accept the responsibility of adjusting to altered expectations, as an act of faith. Although I was a manager, and the respondents were aware of it, I was also genuinely anxious to enhance staff-management relationships, and I believed that this was understood by the representatives, so I could not anticipate proposals would be forthcoming with which I could disagree. In any event, my commitment was greater as a manager than as a researcher, as the staff were also aware, and consequently ultimately any expectations I could not willingly accommodate would become subject to the usual negotiating processes, in which I would have to naturally protect the management interest.

What was considerably more difficult to handle, and actually modified the research process, was the relationship between the research process and the conduct of industrial relations that was continuing outside it. One of the orthodoxies of qualitative validation is that respondents should be provided with a resume of the data obtained from their interviews and it was my intention to do this, but shortly after the shop steward and staff representative interviews were completed a national pay award dispute began and relationships became strained. I noted at the time that it was best not to give the representatives their summaries until the research process had been completed because some of the conclusions might have been unpalatable to them and because of the industrial action relationships were particularly valuable and sensitive. This brought an awareness that co-operation with the research could at any stage be withdrawn as a consequence of a deterioration in the relationships relating to the normal workplace issues, or even as a novel form of

sanction during the pay dispute, and that also this was not a problem that an outside researcher might have to cope with, but was peculiar to a mangerially-orientated internal researcher who had to be sensitive to the work environment and pace and shape the research accordingly.

In summary, the purpose of striving to achieve research within one's own organisation was to obtain the uniquely rewarding outcomes of what Friedlander has termed "an inclusive research process" (1968:377), which can be characterised as follows:

> "1. Communication An inclusive research process is fostered by open and honest communication of relevant information between researcher and subject. Each is interested in informing as well as being informed. .... 2. Attitudes Toward One Another An inclusive research process is aided by a trusting, friendly attitude and a willingness to respond helpfully to the other's needs and requests. .... 3. Concern With Issues An inclusive research process is fostered by definition of the conflicting interests between research and subject as a mutual problem to be solved by collaborative effort. It is facilitated by the recognition of the legitimacy of each other's interest and of the need for a solution which is responsive to the needs of both researcher and subject.".

In this last paragraph is an encapsulation of the research intent. Differences of interest were not to be ignored or minimised but were to be central to the study, examined in a co-operative endeavour by representatives of the different interests.

4. Literature Review Commenced

Equipped with some practical and theoretical problems, an exceptionally broad research intent and an attraction to qualitative and internal research, the research process continued by the initiation of a review of relevant literature and attendance at methodological seminars. This may sound mechanical and uneventful

but in reality two major mistakes were made. The first was that the literature scan reflected the original research intent - it was too wide and too vague. However, it is doubtful whether any research could be criticised for possessing foundations in a literature survey that was excessively rich and varied. The error was that within the time constraint of the thesis period and the normal commitments at work and at home, obtaining such a foundation would not have been a consciously-derived priority. The other mistake was far more fundamental and might have been avoided if an item in The Times (29.4.85.) about postgraduate research had appeared when I commenced my own study. It advised that:

> "The researcher also needs to acquire one or two skills that the undergraduates can happily do without: learning to type, possibly mastering the skills of word processing, learning to keep records in order, especially learning to use to best advantage that Pandora's Box of every researcher, the filing card system. Research at its least glamorous is three years spent filling out little cards, one per book, per article, or even per idea.".

Little did I know when I decided to use a filing card system that I was merely rediscovering the wheel but a far more serious consequence was the fact that I had already surveyed over fifty references and had stored the information in book form. This subsequently rendered the information I had obtained of very restricted value because once I had begun to structure the thesis in filing card form it was not feasible to devote further considerable time and effort to transferring information from one store to another. The works reviewed included those by Hespe and Wall (1976), Emery and Thorsrud (1969), Sadler (1970), Blumberg (1968), Richbell (1976), Clegg (1955, 1963), Guest and Knight (1979) and Pateman (1970), but none of these references are used in the thesis. Nevertheless, they

obviously all contributed to the understanding that was essential in order to undertake the research and which guided the analysis of the data.

In a slight departure from normal research methods I decided from the outset that the study should reflect the dynamism of industrial relations and some of the external influences upon managers and staff. Accordingly, I was keen that the literature survey should accommodate relevant items in the professional management press and in national and local newspapers.

5. Research Design Refined

An increasing awareness of the reality of the research process and the march of time led to the first modification of the research intent. The somewhat nebulous notions of undertaking research in Mid and West Glamorgan were dropped and even within South Glamorgan I decided that rather than assess participation in several hospitals I would only compare Llandough with another, similar general hospital. I still proposed, therefore, to base my research upon the management, staff and their representatives within the hospitals and upon the senior management of the health authority and full time trade union officials. I would largely rely upon interviews but wished this method to be supplemented by tape recordings of industrial relations interactions, by feedback analysis and by the use of diaries.

Anecdotes or intuition may be of little intrinsic analytic value but the use of practical examples in the research thesis could invaluably indicate a 'feel' for the industrial relations context. It was hoped

that this would become particularly apparent in the diary exercises. Previous studies that have incorporated this technique (e.g. Partridge 1977, Marchington 1980) appear to have simply sought a factual record of the events in which the research participants were involved. My aim was to obtain similar records, but ones which were enhanced by the participants' observations about the events. I began to complete my own diary on this basis and I subsequently approached representatives of the trade unions and staff organisations to do the same and even offered a small financial incentive to the NUPE branch secretary, who had by then retired from work as a senior porter.

6. Access Negotiated

My Sector Administrator, the Area Operational Services Administrator and the Area Personnel Officer all very willingly gave their agreement to my research proposals and although the Area Administrator was supportive he highlighted a number of important issues. He was worried about the subjectivity involved; pleased about the involvement of the other hospital; expressed his doubt about the value to the health authority of previous research but felt that mine was of more promising worth; raised the issues of the problems of shop stewards in management positions and of management attitudes to higher decision-making processes outside the hospital; emphasised the need to set a target date since otherwise the study would be over-extended; tactfully expressed his unwillingness to receive feedback directly during the study and emphasised the importance of feeding information "up the line"; and he believed that the lack of information about how staff react to decisions was a particularly interesting area of enquiry on its own.

Informal approaches were made to some of the trade union representatives in the hospital and they subsequently all agreed in principle at a meeting that they would co-operate with the research. The NUPE and NALGO representatives agreed to keep diaries. The only major problem of access came when the NUPE officers presented and supported my proposals at the NUPE branch Annual General Meeting. The members were apparently particularly suspicious that information I would receive in the course of my interviews might be used against them, although I had assured the officials that this would not be the case. There was evidently uproar when mention was made of tape recording and eventually one of the officers had to suggest that a vote was taken, which went heavily against me among the thirty or so people present. When this was conveyed to me I suggested that it might help if I attended the next meeting of the branch and the officers agreed. On this occasion there was a debate about whether I should be allowed to attend but eventually I was invited to join them. I presented my proposals and there was considerable discussion about them, with strong suspicions still evident among a number of the members present. I was asked to leave while they decided whether or not my research should be allowed to proceed. At the end of the meeting I was informed that consent had been given and from then on no difficulties at all were experience with respondents or participating organisations.

7. Data Collection

The tape recording of day-to-day industrial relations quickly became established as relatively routine and appeared to present no impediment to normal interaction. For the first phase of the interview programme I decided to meet with each of the shop stewards and staff

representatives in the hospital. Where possible, the interviews took place in a location within the respondent's department, where they felt comfortable, would not be interrupted and believed that confidentiality would be maintained. Where this was not possible a small sitting room was used which was in a very quiet area, although central to the hospital. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were completed in one session, except for a protracted discussion with one respondent which took place over two sessions.

8. Research Design Revised

The practical implications of research rapidly became apparent. The activity of arranging the interviews, completing them, typing them, identifying the more important data, and collating it was time-consuming to a degree that was out of all proportion to that which had been anticipated and consequently much more of the original research intent had to be jettisoned. Plans to study the other hospital were deleted completely, as were interviews with the heads of department in my own hospital. In essence, I reached the stage where just completing the representative's interviews, interviewing a cross-section of the hospital staff and feeding back the data to the interviewees, heads of departments and senior managers was the most optimistic that I could achieve. In terms of objectives this meant that I lost the ability to obtain an indication of the influence of my involvement in the hospital upon the data and to assess managerial responses to participation.

9. Data Analysis

The phase of processing and evaluating data ran largely concurrently with the interview phase and reference has already been made to some of the stages involved. By this time, the information from the literature survey was being stored on filing cards and the interviews and tape recorded industrial relations interactions were being typed in full before being evaluated and the most important data transferred onto cards. Categories within the research data quickly became readily discernible and these created a structure for the filing card system. Unfortunately, the staff representatives did not maintain diaries and therefore no data was available from this source.

I completed a diary for approximately a year but ironically I did so with a degree of conscientiousness that was ultimately self-defeating, for a quite unpredictable reason. The major stimulus to the research enquiry was a genuine anxiety about how to improve workplace industrial relations and to engender change without destructive conflict. Completing a diary, I found, meant that I was dwelling even more in my own time upon the industrial relations difficulties that I was trying to accommodate and it became an activity that sustained and generated high levels of introspection, anxiety and uncertainty and this became counter-productive in the exercise of my managerial function. The penultimate entry largely refers to a conversation with two NUPE shop stewards. One (Paul) had previously been exceptionally militant and resistant to change but had recently agreed to a proposal of mine. The other steward (Sam) had been more moderate but during the course of the conversation he refused to accept the proposal that I had discussed and agreed with the other.

Writing that evening I described the day's events and noted:

> "Busy for the rest of the afternoon, but in the evening once again depressed about the porters, and tempted to take hard line. Realise I must exercise patience and particularly conscious that my industrial relations management will be interview subject at Reorganisation. Clearly Paul is being kept in check and much more answerable, but this time it has rebounded against me. Pessimistic about Monday's meeting of the porters. May see Paul and/or Sam tomorrow.".

10. Further Research Modification

The scope of the research was substantially diminished by this stage and so were the research objectives, although this was not entirely due to the same overwhelming pragmatic pressures. The review of the literature and the initial interviews with the representatives began to isolate industrial relations characteristics that were intimately associated with participation but had apparently received inadequate attention in the past in this context. This concentration of the research endeavour was largely influenced by the desire to relate it to the understanding, if not the resolution, of the very real industrial relations difficulties being experienced at the same time. As Mangham (1978:136) observes:

> "In the process of collecting these data, but more particularly in the process of sifting, the interventionist's interpretations become important features. The data are organized, are structured, and are put in a form which reflect the values and ideas the interventionist brings to the situation. It is impossible to make a neutral presentation; the interventionist has attended to certain features of the interaction and has ignored others. His predispositions have entered into the review and coloured it.".

The emphasis I was bringing to bear was that described by Brannen in his account of work undertaken on behalf of the Department of Employment (1981). The Department wished to pursue two research

approaches, the second of which:

> "would involve more detailed analysis of the processes of interaction between the parties to collective employment relationships both within formal procedures and more generally, with a view to understanding how they come to be as they are, how they operate, how the parties themselves judge their operation, and what the outcomes are." (p 78).

Brannen comments that another interest of the Department is further research:

> "on the relationship between participation and collective bargaining and the experiences of parties seeking to introduce new participative systems in areas of high trade union density;".

The progress of my own research was very similar to that described by Armstrong et al in the preface to the report of their study (1981:9), which:

> "originated in an interest in 'custom and practice' (C and P) as both a source and a form of workplace industrial relations rules. Our initial intention was to explore this concept through in-depth observational studies in three locations. As our research progressed, however, it became clear that this formed a somewhat limited element of the legitimising arguments found in the interplay between workers and managers in the three factories, and consequently the scope of the research was broadened into a fuller examination of workers' and managers' notions of legitimacy which seemed to us to be central to the process of workplace rule making. C and P was only one element of this, and by no means the dominant one.".

My interest in participation was comparable to these authors' interest in custom and practice and in the same way I centred upon the nature of staff and management legitimacy, which I translated into the practical manifestations of the exercise of managerial authority and trade union initiative. These two issues combined in a concern to understand how and why issues become negotiable.

This was both directly relevant to the industrial relations context of the study and an area apparently in need of further theoretical development. Armstrong et al contend, for example, that

(1981:35), "it is surely common that the impulse to campaign for rule changes springs from a spontaneous sense and injustice" and Partridge (1976:7) emphasises that:

> "the focus of industrial relations has been on grievance resolution rather than on grievance formulation. The implication that the progress of a grievance may be studied without reference to the way it was generated, is that the process of generation is unimportant to the process of resolving that grievance. This assumption has neither been made explicit or defended in the literature.".

One means of assessing the subjects that should be part of a participative system is to study the issues which give rise to a sense of grievance.

The emergence of these key issues influenced the way the research was organised, and suggested further development. When the interviews with the shop stewards and staff organisation representatives began, the strategy was that they should be as informal and unstructured as possible, allowing their characters to be developed by the respondents. This strategy was maintained throughout the first interviewing phase but as it progressed an awareness of the way in which key issues were detaching themselves from the general discussion led to the formation of a minimum core to the interviews, to ensure that the key issues were considered in each of them. It was also suggested that there would be advantages in the second interview phase, the one with the staff themselves, in developing the core into a much more structured interview format that would concentrate upon the ideas that needed to be examined in depth, and that it might even be helpful to design a questionnaire on the same basis. There were definitely advantages to this, since it would make the research process more 'efficient' and it would help to achieve some consistency within the data. However, this would require other interesting issues that had been

raised to be abandoned, would create the risk of disassociating my data from the general industrial relations context in a way that it was one of my prime objectives to avoid, and would create the potential for the quality of the data to be considerably diminished because of the possibility of greatly increased pressure upon the respondents in the interviews.

But the very fact that I was considering how to approach research activity involving staff themselves is another indication of the dynamism in the research design. One of the issues I had discussed with the staff representatives as a group after their interviews was that time constraints were unlikely to make this possible and it was only as a result of their response that I endeavoured to meet my original commitment.

Heller (1969) has enthusiastically reported the value of group feedback analysis and it has already been noted that a number of writers view this mechanism to be one of the most crucial methods of validating qualititive research. An attempt was made to enable the shop stewards and representatives to respond to the data but it achieved only moderate success. With hindsight, it is possible to suggest that it is erroneous to try to both validate previous data and generate new data and it may also be unrealistic to seek the validation of interpretation through the perceptions of the research respondents.

Much of the feedback was received in virtual silence. I began by explaining the procedure I was using and the way in which I was processing the data I obtained, stressing that I felt that it was important they should have some idea of the information I had received

and the proposals for future stages of the research. An explanation was provided about why two new shop stewards had not been interviewed and an assurance given that they would be included, but it subsequently proved impossible to match the interviewing process to the changes in staff representation. In a manner which I attempted to ensure was not academic, I briefly described the issues which had become central to the research and then stated that I wished not only to let them know what I had learnt but that, "I also want to make sure I am accurate in picking up what you have said, so if you want to disagree or if I miss anything out please let me know." and paused, but no response was received. Some interest was shown when one of the representatives referred to the way in which redundancies had been declared and this led on to a very brief discussion about whether or not management cared for its staff. The form that participation should take and who should be involved in it provoked two of the representatives to argue that trade union representation could provide the only means of participation.

But the most vigorous reaction came when I announced that lack of time would not allow me to interview other members of staff and that instead I was intending to interview a few supervisors. There was general consternation and the ensuing discussion is enlightening about the genuine desire of the representatives to encourage the research and the confidence they had that they had been able to present themselves accurately in their own interviews. One exchange was initiated by a NUPE shop steward:

Colin: You're only interviewing us as union officials so therefore obviously you're going to get a biased answer - answers to your questions. But by excluding the ordinary member - I mean you might ask them, 'Did you join the union because you wanted and you needed them or is it because unionism is within the hospital?'. Those type of answers from them, I think, would paint a different picture altogether on what your thesis is about.

Meryl: Yes. Or does a lot depend on the steward? You know, his character.

Colin: Exactly.

Graham: And you'd find out whether the ordinary member - whether he really feels that his grievances, or his problems, are dealt with by the union.

Me: You want me to do some research for you? (Laughter from representatives).

The force of their enthusiasm made me reconsider:

Me: What if I do thirty members of staff? (Several representatives expressed approval).

Paul: I think it is warranted, sir.

Graham: If you do the ordinary staff it would be very useful for your - it's a bit one-sided now. Heavily biased, isn't it, really.

Me: Which way?

Four representatives unanimously: Trade unions.

Later I reiterated my intentions:

Me: All right, I'll reconsider interviewing the staff, but I think thirty out of the number of people I am considering is not very many.

Susan: Couldn't you take their names out of a hat?

Me: Well I will do that. It will be entirely at random, but even so thirty is nothing out of probably three or four hundred.

Susan: But I feel it's better than nothing.

Several voices: Yes, that's right.

Colin: I think you're starting your thesis a certain degree up, instead of at ground level. You know, in other words you should start off with the members of staff first of all to see why they want the union.

Graham: Yes, and to see whether they think that there's means other than the union where they can communicate with management and management communicate with them.

Meryl: Yes.

Graham: Participation - where they can participate. They may be very strong, or they may feel that - the only way they feel is their union, you know.

These conversations demonstrate that the representatives were enthusiastic and committed and that they exhibited no anxiety about the method of interviewing or the issues discussed. They reveal their candour about the research topics and the sincerity of their desire to obtain a 'factual' picture of staff attitudes to representation and participation. Their agreement about the bias of the research to date also shows an enormous amount of trust in my interpretation of their interviews, and must additionally demonstrate their satisfaction with the general tenor of their own interviews.

Thus the research process continued, albeit reluctantly, with the instigation of interviews with ordinary staff. It was hoped that approximately fifty staff could be interviewed, who would be drawn from all of the staff of the hospital, except doctors, nurses and

works staff (who had no line relationship with the researcher), as listed in the hospital's establishment list. Great pains were taken to ensure that the respondents were chosen randomly yet properly reflected characteristics such as the wide diversity of occupational groups and the in-balance of full-time to part-time staff between the different occupational groups. Eventually, once the three administrators, heads of departments and supervisors, and shop stewards and representatives of staff organisations were removed from the establishment list, the decision was made that the best way to derive the sample was to obtain the sum of the total number of hours worked and divide by fifty. This obtained a distance expressed in terms of hours worked to be used to separate the staff chosen from the list, with the first point within the range chosen by random sampling.

Most of the staff were interviewed in the same sitting room used for some of the representatives' interviews but not unexpectedly this second phase of interviewing was rather more difficult. Although arrangements had been made through heads of departments and an explanation given about what the interviews would be for, this had rarely been conveyed to the staff themselves. The area of the hospital where the interviews took place was unknown to many of the staff and this initially appeared to have an unsettling effect. Most significantly, and this is probably a research finding in itself, it became obvious that the individual members of staff were totally unaccustomed to articulating their attitudes to work and their opinions about workplace industrial relations. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and was intended to concentrate upon the key issues that had been identified in the previous research, but the greater inhibition of the members of staff meant that most of the

interviews were characterised by a first half in which the interviewee was allowed to relax and talk generally about their specific duties and relationships and a second half in which an attempt was made to move on imperceptibly from the respondent's concerns to those central to the research. This was successfully achieved in the great majority of the interviews.

11. Research Design Final Revision

Due to problems such as annual leave and sickness, it was not possible to interview the whole sample of fifty members of staff, but about forty-five interviews were undertaken within a period of a very small number of weeks. The result was what in modern parlance might be described as data overload. It was virtually impossible to undertake any of the research work, apart from the interviews themselves, during normal working hours and the task of processing and evaluating this sudden and substantial supply of data was once again overwhelming. The decision had to be made that although the interviews were tape recorded it would simply not be feasible to transfer the data from the tapes into the filecard system. The thesis therefore makes no reference to this body of data but the very process of completing the staff interviews contributed to the conceptual development of the work.

12. Data Presentation

The research process described so far may appear to emphasise the increasing restrictions placed upon its scope and objectives, but in fact by this stage a great deal of field and literature data had been

accumulated. It had been organised so that it conformed to a rudimentary structure but largely only under tentative chapter headings and major sub-divisions. No attempt was made to refine this arrangement until work began on producing the thesis itself. It was thus the requirement to present the data that compelled it to be given comprehensible form, but by structuring the data through this process it was hoped that the narrative would be as sensitively grounded as possible in the fieldwork and literature review.

13. Interpretation

The meanings within the data were similarly not specified in any great detail until it was required to be presented, although it has already been noted that a number of issues had seemed to be particularly pertinent at a general level well before the research was completed. The presentation of the data and its interpretation can logically be identified as two distinct activities but in practice therefore they were inseparable. It was never intended that the data should merely represent a factual account of one particular case study. It was anticipated, correctly, that the data would generate some common themes and that the field data would need to be related to the conceptual and theoretical research context. No systematic method existed for doing this and it required the exercise of judgements reflecting the researcher's own values and meanings, which it has already been observed Mangham has explicitly defended.

This is not considered to be a weakness of the research but a strength. Hyman warns that (1977:72):

> "The current emphasis upon the 'action frame of reference' is not, however, without its dangers: for some sociologists, in their reaction against positivism, have neglected the structural influences of which the actors themselves may be unconscious. In effect, the views and definitions of the actors are treated as a sufficient explanation of the social situation being investigated.".

Instead, he believes that there is:

> "a complex two-way process in which men's goals, ideas and beliefs influence and are influenced by the social structure. To do justice to its complexity, industrial sociologists must be attuned to this dynamic interaction between structure and consciousness. A static or a one-way analysis necessarily distorts social reality, and is therefore an inadequate basis for understanding industrial behaviour or predicting its development." (p 73).

The process of interpretation, therefore, was one of developing a fusion between the key themes in the data; the formal, conceptual and cultural order in which they were manifest; and the associated body of theoretical and practical work.

This fusion was achieved but it has already been noted that the process of interpretation and the presentation of the research data coalesced into one activity. Consequently the description of the fusion is not a separate element of the thesis but an integral part of the assessment of the field data. This has been arranged into four broad subject areas, namely perceptions of the management function, the nature of trade union initiative, attitudes to participative processes and the propensity of staff and their representatives to participate. The discussion of each therefore draws not only upon the Llandough data but also upon all the other relevant sources examined during the research process.

14. Theoretical Framework

The dynamism between the field data, the other manifestations of the social order and the external body of theory is not, however, one way. While it is unrealistic to consider the field data in isolation from its contexts, equally the data should be able to generate theory or at least provide a contribution towards it. Mangham (1978:16) urges that:

> "working from the observed situation or from the perceptions of those involved in that situation, the qualitative researcher should be able to draw out a number of inferences which have wider application and to present these inferences at an appropriate level of abstraction. The best work in this developing tradition presents both concepts and the concrete instances which embody or illustrate them."

Qualitative studies should contribute to the knowledge of the field and present opportunities for further research. It is Berg's judgement that (1979:269):

> "From an overall perspective, the value of a theoretical framework is ultimately determined by its utility. No matter how rigorous the research design or how general the findings, a theory is judged by its contributions to theory and to practice. The value of these contributions is dependent on the way in which the theoretical framework relates to existing knowledge in the field, i.e. whether it validates or invalidates other theories and to what extent it opens up new perspectives for future research.".

In the research process described in this thesis the derivation of theory and a general, analytic framework was not strained or contrived, but thoroughly grounded in the data. Just as it revealed key themes, so it suggested relationships between them and it is these relationships that have been developed to generate a commentary of more universal application.

Conclusion

Some explanation has been provided about how the data was evaluated to achieve an interpretation and a theoretical framework and now consideration needs to be given to what criteria exist to evaluate the evaluation. Berg (1979:267) indicates just how radically the criteria relating to qualitative research may diverge from those applicable to other research:

> "There are several reasons why the criteria of accuracy should not be used to evaluate the interpretation. ....
> Thus, the valuation is to be based on concepts that are more attuned to its explanatory character of the interpretation. One such concept is the 'credibility' of the interpretation. There are at least two ways in which credibility can be estimated. The first involves the extent to which the interpretation 'makes sense', i.e. provides a meaningful explanation of the phenomenon under study.".

His second way of estimating credibility, "is to determine the extent to which the interpretation is supported by the data.". Some of the criteria by which it would be appropriate to evaluate this study have been referred to previously in the description of the research process, but in summary emphasis would be upon values of pragmatism. These would include whether it displayed the uniqueness of the context of the study, whether it provided a proper sense of 'life in the raw', whether it generated data that seemed pertinent to the context, whether its conclusions seem to 'reasonably' fit the data, whether it generated theoretical development, and whether it would be of value to participants in similar industrial relations contexts.

There is no doubt that the original research design was grossly flawed but an attempt has been made to be open about the dynamism of the research design, and in particular about its necessity to respond to pragmatic pressures. This has been made available to assist the

evaluation of the study but also to demonstrate the spectrum of learning that can be derived from research activity. The purpose of research is to gain knowledge and insight and in this particular study this goal was met not only in relation to the purpose of the study but also to the method of achieving it. The quotation from Robert Louis Stevenson is rarely completed but no more apt judgement could be made about this study than by doing so. "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour" (Virginibus Puerisque VI El Dorado).

Chapter Five

MANAGEMENT - PERCEPTIONS OF PURPOSE, PEOPLE AND PREROGATIVES

> "I think they would all like a say in these menus and I would definitely like to sit in on these menus, but they couldn't tell her about her menus, because she's the boss.".

This comment made by a NUPE shop steward in the Catering Department must to many epitomise some of the most fundamental justifications for promoting increased participation. It manifests the latent desire for participation, indicates that there are managerial functions in which both staff and their trade union representatives could constructively engage and suggests that the initiative to release this potential lies with the manager, by adopting a more open style.

The simple logic makes it very tempting to accept this conclusion and unfortunately rarely is it recognised that it is almost entirely superficial. There is a further, deeper level of analysis that involves discovering the full subtlety of workplace perceptions and relationships, and in particular identifying their mutual dependence and definition and realising that far more complex considerations apply if genuinely effective change is to be achieved. Furthermore, it is necessary to develop a much greater realism about how workplace perceptions and relationships vary multi-dimensionally, e.g. across time, with different individuals, with different issues and in different places.

For example, the Society of Radiographers' representative was very complimentary about how approachable the Superintendent Radiographer was:

> "People can say to her, 'Look, this is ridiculous how this rota is running' or this, that and the other, that she's just worked out, and if she thinks you're right, she'll alter it.".

The superficial inference would be that the Catering Manager could quickly enhance the involvement of her staff by being as accessible and willing to change as the Superintendent Radiographer but the inadequacy of such a conclusion can be demonstrated by posing just two relatively simple questions - why did the two managers have different styles and what do the two comments reveal about the two representatives' perceptions of the subordinate/ manager relationship?

Personal variables, such as personality, competence and knowledge, may provide a large part of the answer to the first, but so may the characteristics of the two different departments. The Catering Manager had a quasi-professional training quite different from that of her staff, who were all ancillary workers. She had an office on the other side of a corridor from her department, which was geographically large and physically divided into different sections, e.g. kitchen, wash-up and dining room. Her staff worked shifts covering a 24-hour day seven days a week and consisted of part-timers as well as full-timers, on a number of different grades, with different degrees of training, separate types of work and limited interaction between the members of the different sections or shifts. On the other hand, the radiographers were all professional staff and had all received the same training as the Superintendent. The department was geographically small and consisted of considerably fewer members of staff, who were all full-time and essentially worked normal weekday hours. The Superintendent had no office at all, shared the same rest room as her staff and the managerial content of her job was so considerably less than that of the Catering Manager that she spent the great majority

of her time undertaking the same duties as her staff, working next to them. One must wonder, therefore, to what extent either head of department had freedom to exercise their managerial function in any other manner.

Examining the two representatives' perceptions of the subordinate/manager relationship reveals particularly interesting similarities and differences. Both, for example, were able to identify aspects of the managerial function, aspects which both saw as significantly affecting the nature of their job and both felt the wish to influence. Neither contested the ability of the manager to make the decisions, one because "she's the boss" and the other because it was accepted that changes would only be made "if she thinks you're right", and neither suggested that the head of department either formally or informally positively encouraged involvement. The essential difference was that the radiographers felt able to exercise initiative in commenting upon and influencing a managerial function whereas the catering staff did not. Again, one must wonder to what extent the cause of this lay with the individual managers. An important question that the research sought to answer was to what degree it may arise from the staffs' own constructs of the authority relationship.

Extremes of authority structures are easily found. One example is described in a relatively recent newspaper report (Sunday Times Business News 31.1.82.):

> "This is what a director of one Birmingham engineering company had to say about what amounts to a revolution in relations with the shop floor. 'The initiative has switched. Before, union power had to be seen to be believed. The shop stewards had petrified the previous management into signing agreements that there would be no visits to the shop floor by management without prior notice. When I arrived it was near anarchy. When I went

> down to the shop floor, three shop stewards pressed around me wanting to know what I wanted.'"

One of the hospital's ASTMS representatives articulated a fear of the kind of power employers can exercise:

> "Because management have always had the right of dismissal, within the terms of contracts and all the rest of it, people always view management as a potential threat to their security. I mean, it's just like a sort of large bear and a small monkey in a forest.".

Even allowing for artistic licence, an employee, and a trade union representative in particular, who makes such a comparison clearly has a different view of the subordinate/manager relationship, or at the very least has a quite different confidence about the ability to resist or alter managerial control, from a member of a workforce which considers it reasonable, and is able, to prevent management visiting the shop floor. And what would the distance be between their views on participation? Would it even have any relevance to either of them? And if it did, would it for one enhance the sense of personal security or achieve any greater constructive liaison for the other, or might it simply obtain for the other workforce further means of restricting management? The hypothetical questions could continue at length but the point is surely already made. The effect of trying to introduce or improve participation can substantially depend upon the nature of the current workplace relationship between staff and management, both defined formally and by the subjective assessment of the participants, and equally the staff-management relationship can be substantially altered by participation. Consequently, an attempt was made in the research to identify staff perceptions of the management function.

The Management Task

A TUC document (1983:5) provides an exceptionally concise description of the management task:

> "The principal objective of management is to control and direct the use of resources at its disposal at the maximum efficiency possible. These resources will be materials, labour, equipment, land and building.".

Chamberlain describes the management function in organisational terms (1967:218):

> "An impasse has no place in a healthy business. Varieties of opinion may be represented, and indeed their expression may be encouraged by frequent resort to committee action, but a process of refining opinion into decision and for translating decision into action cannot be avoided. This is true not only of final authority, but of management in all its frames and centers of co-ordination. In each frame, at each center of co-ordination, authority for decision and action must reside.".

This view is open to challenge and Marchington describes the response (1980:5,6):

> "Management is attempting to legitimise its function by reference to the idea that managers have an expertise indispensible to the efficient organisation of the industry",

and:

> "There is a strong feeling that managers, by virtue of their experience, training or innate ability, are the only ones capable of making decisions of a highly technical or complicated nature.".

In their discussion of the sources of the legitimacy of the management function, Armstrong et al (1981:64) emphasise the significance of the law and one detects echoes of the large bear and small monkey analogy:

> "the initial and in some senses residual presumptions of the employment contract are of the legally supported power of the employer to determine the what, where, when and how of employment.".

The same authors also point out that amongst workers there is, "little systematic, across-the-board rejection of managerial ideology" (p 41)

but they recognise that (p 66):

> "the day to day exercise of management rule making is subject to restrictions. On a number of issues the power of the employer is regulated by the law (e.g. 'protective' legislation on unfair dismissal, prescribed period of notice, hours of work and safety) and is also - in a restricted field - limited by union organisation and the possible risk of facing collective industrial action. Further, aside from the generalised duty of obedience on employees, the contract of employment itself often fails to define and regulate a multiplicity of detailed issues.".

This paradox is just one of several revealed either by similarity or omission when the research data was compared with the descriptions of the purpose and justification of the management function cited above. In contrast to the TUC document, the staff found it impossible to generalise about the practical purposes of management and neither did the legitimising qualities of managers portrayed by Marchington appear to be of any great relevance to them. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the management function was not only rarely questioned but in fact was most earnestly supported and as Armstrong et al indicate the strongly asserted contention that management must and will be challenged, particularly by trade unions and staff organisations, was not intended to detract from this support.

The staff seemed to particularly identify and value the purpose of the management function described in organisational terms similar to those of Chamberlain. The purpose of management was described in the sense of "to take responsibility", "to supervise - to supervise the whole thing" and, "the manager's got to decide" but there was no explicit acknowledgement that this may require the exercise of special expertise. On the contrary, if anything the assumption was that managers lacked sufficient or any experience of the day-to-day practical work of their staff. One shop steward provided a particul-

arly precise yardstick. "What work did you do in a hospital? Now you've got it theoretically from A to Z, but practically what work have you done in a hospital such as our own? Have you seen a post mortem?".

There was considerable concern about management's power if it was unchecked:

> "Major problems would come along when you get - unfortunately fall into the difficulty of a dictatorial attitude. There won't be much really you can do then, as the person who is receiving the dictatorial attitude. The only thing you can do is become a little bit belligerent, and still do it.".

> "Things have altered for the better now, but years ago in the Health Service you used to get a lot of the old school and the bullying tactics of "You do this', 'You do that' and 'I know best', and they would literally push you about.".

The shop stewards were clear about why the worst excesses of management no longer existed:

> "years ago when the trade unions weren't as active as they are now, the manager would come out to you and say, "You do that'. You didn't question him. You had to do it the way he'd said it, although you might think there's an easier way to do it. But you had to do it his way.".

But the same shop steward, who so clearly valued the protection against management provided by active trade unions, was in no doubt that it did not undermine the managerial function. There was, however, a point at which he could foresee this happening. When asked at what stage he thought loss of managerial power had gone too far, he replied:

> "When you get the ordinary person telling the manager what to do, not a union representative or anything like that, but the ordinary person - say walking down the corridor comes over to you and says, 'Look, I'm not doing this or not doing some other.'. To me, that would be going too far, but it is just one, the person representing, that can go in and represent the men, and speak to that man, to me that's O.K..".

He also tellingly described the dilemma caused by the enthusiasm of his support both for the management function and for the right to

challenge it:

> "I don't care what anybody say, there's always got to be one person there to be looked up to, and you know that man is in charge, even though you turn around and say, 'That man is my enemy'.".

Earnest but easy distinctions such as these appeared often in the conversations with the shop stewards. In discussing examples of contentious issues, they commonly displayed what could only be described as a simplistic analysis of the managerial problems involved or piously explained that if only a more honest/considerate/less sudden approach had been adopted issues could have been resolved very amicably. Nevertheless, there were points in the interviews when they indicated that managers had a difficult job which was obviously important in the organisation and which involved skillfully balancing demands within and upon the organisation. There were certainly no comments such as, "I could do their job." or "What makes them special?" or "We all know what we're doing, so why have managers?". In other words, the shop stewards' image of the job of management varied, almost between extremes, depending upon whether they looked at it in abstract or in the context of practical examples.

The fear of unrestrained managerial power, however, was a recurrent theme. As one shop steward stated:

> "If it came to pass that there wasn't a union here at all you'd dictate - Mark Rees, Miss Davenport or any administrative staff - would dictate to the point that the person's life, the ancillary staff's life, would be hell. It would be hell.".

What is additionally interesting about this judgement is that it says something both about the individuals involved and the constraints under which they work, and these were perceptions that the research sought to identify.

Managers As Individuals

> "I find there is a much more cohesive uniformity about managers than there is about trade union representatives. Most managers appear to be articulate, highly skilled, they seem to know what they're doing, they're very good at being managers, most of the time, and I suspect most of them would be better if they were left alone to get on with it.".

The conclusion alone of this assessment by an ASTMS representative of managers as individuals is unexpected but it has other features that make the judgement even more exceptional. The level of articulation is obviously impressive and it is used to complement managers on their ability. But more significantly, the representative seems able to conceptualise managerial performance and to use several quite clear criteria by which to judge it. Other staff were only able to talk about specific individuals or about one facet of the behaviour or image of managers.

One quality that emerged as particularly pertinent in the data was respect. Even the majority of shop stewards not only expressed or implied the importance of being able to respect their head of department, but also clearly did so. This seemed inconsistent with many of their other comments about how the managerial function was exercised and it appears that it is largely impossible to explain rationally. On the few occasions when representatives considered the source of respect, the results were identical and probably for managers, rather perverse. Respect was seen to arise from a willingness to accommodate the opinions of the staff. Representatives of the Society of Radiographers and NUPE expressed it thus:

> "I think a lot of your authority is backed up by the amount of respect you can command. If people can see that you're a reasonable sort of person, who can appreciate when you haven't

> got all the facts and we can give you a bit more, and you say 'I didn't quite realise that. Yes, I'll think that one out again.' and, 'You might be right there.' or, 'We'll come halfway along there.'".
>
> "And, to my way of thinking, she'd be shown more respect because she is willing to negotiate and sit down and talk and try and get the best way to do the whole thing.".

But there were indications that the possession of respect could be to the detriment of other qualities, that more 'dictatorial' managers could still retain respect and that managers could be excessively amenable. One of the NUPE officers who believe that willingness to negotiate increased respect when asked about the effect on the manager's power replied:

> "Now that's a different thing. You're talking about power in the manager, which is a different thing altogether. You asked me, 'Could he hold his respect?'. Of course he could, but he would have no power, not as great a power as he did have, as you say, in the sixties and seventies.".

This officer had also been the person who described how some staff saw the people in charge of them as their enemy and would do anything to oppose them, but he had then continued, "But in the long run, he still looks up to him.". Many managers would probably be able to comprehend the existence of this possession of the dual emotions of conflict and respect in workplace relations, but they would probably be surprised at the strength of the distinction between respect and power. It is also relevant to the general participation debate. It may be that the staff in fact appreciate a balance being maintained between management by direction and management by consultation/ negotiation and would like neither to predominate. There are certainly times when management is regarded as insufficiently vigorous:

> "But sometimes I think J. is soft to a point, when I've taken staff in there. I don't think she's hard enough with the staff, because if I've got taken in to be disciplined over something I don't feel that she is hard enough. I don't know if it's because she is always smiling - the fact that she's always got a smile on her face - that she is not serious and stern enough and she always seems to be making light of it.".

One feature of the participation debate is the belief of its advocates that participation is an invaluable means of tapping the wealth of knowledge of those at the point of production or service. The staff identified the same situation, but from the other end of the telescope. Levels of management beyond the hospital were remote and unaware of its day-to-day activity:

> "I feel sometimes that the Health Authority is very far removed from the grass roots and they don't really know what is going on.".

> "As far as Area level is concerned, there is very little that can be done, I think, very little, because it is far too far removed from what's actually happening.".

> "The likes of C. [Health Authority Chairman], I don't think they've got any idea what goes on.... They've got no interest in the hospitals. Oh, they go to their meeting once a month, or whatever it is, and that's it. .... They don't know what's going on until they come to you, whereas to me they're the people who decide in the end, aren't they. .... And these are the people that you've got to bow to.".

Of course, what such comments reveal is not only a set of perceptions about managers as individuals at higher levels but also a set of perceptions about their function. The purpose of the Health Authority is largely viewed as simply to manage its institutions on a day-to-day basis and there is no recognition of its non-institutional or strategic objectives. What the data leaves unresolved is the issue of whether participation should achieve a reduction solely in the perception of distance between the activities of the ordinary staff and higher management or whether it should educate staff into an awareness of, and involvement in, higher management's more strategic concerns.

An even greater challenge is how to modify the perceived distance between ordinary staff and their immediate manager. Because of the relatively shorter distance involved, at least when measured in formal hierarchical terms, and the much greater degree of frequency and intensity of interaction, it might appear that this problem is simpler to resolve. What introduces the complexity is the greater strength with which the perceptions are held and their practical influence upon the experience of work, and therefore their ability to hinder, possibly even to jeopardise, the maintenance of the service or production funtion.

This was demonstrated when I asked a NUPE shop steward if he thought I was simply trying to put as much work as possible on to the porters:

> "Not consciously, because it's spread over a period. I mean, it's not like you walking in and adding on another twelve jobs, like that in one day, but today you might get another little job added on. All right, in itself it's not much, but then in a couple of days' time there's another little job added on, but it's going to be a continuous thing, it's not a one-off affair. I'm not worried about the one-offs, it's the things that's got to be done on a regular basis. And this goes on week after week, another little thing. In itself it's only a little thing, but when you accumulate months of these added together, then it adds up to rather a lot, and the portering staff who are actually doing this work, they see these things being added on because they're the ones actually doing it. Whereby you might issue out this little job and wonder what all the fuss is about, but that's another little kind of thorn gone in again, which perhaps a fortnight ago there was another little job added on.... Now I'm not talking about patients coming in or emergency things, so when the routine jobs are creeping up, so the aggro creeps up with it and it's to stop this build up of the little jobs I think is why they're contested so strongly when someone's told to do it.".

It seemed that the attitudes conveyed in comments such as these related to more general perceptions of whether or not managers 'cared' and this was pursued in the research, with interesting results. The

assumption was false. Nearly all of those interviewed had no preconceived ideas of whether or not managers cared and most of them even found it difficult to imagine what it was that managers could care about. One NUPE shop steward kindly asserted, "Surely the management within this hospital must care about the patients. They've got to have the patients' interests at heart as well, here.". Asked if that was what he believed, he replied, "Oh, yes, they've got to do, otherwise why would they work in the Health Service?". Some stewards tried to respond to questions about whether managers were caring, but they only showed in their replies that they had never previously considered the issue:

Researcher: Do you think managers care about the standards?

Dilys: Well it depends on the person. (pause) I mean, do you care about the standard of the hospital, if it's kept up to standard?

Researcher: Well what's interesting is that you have to ask that.

Dilys: It depends on the person, doesn't it, a lot, whether a manager's interested or not.

Some stewards put the ability to care in a context of other managerial objectives. One NUPE shop steward when asked whether he thought managers cared about the NHS replied, "Well they should.".

Researcher: But do you believe they do?

Paul: Yes, I think they do, but they're bound within certain reservations.

Another NUPE shop steward admitted:

> "I will get a bit exasperated, and think, 'Oh, gosh, we're doing our best.', but I suppose at the end of the day when you sit down, you think, 'Well they're doing their job, the same as we're doing our job, and they got not only to consider the patient but they've got to consider a lot of other things - cost, finance, that all comes into it.'.".

Sometimes pursuit of management's other objectives appeared to simply obstruct the care others were trying to exercise:

> "So the majority of them feel we're working here because we want to, and they'd like to give a good service, and then when somethings comes along which they think is hindering them to give that service, then you get this kind of comment - 'We're trying to do our best for the patients, whereby perhaps management are only thinking about things which don't count.'.".

Some representatives thought that management positively did not care:

Graham: I don't think managers really care, as far as I can see.

Researcher: Care about what?

Graham: Care about the staff.

This NALGO representative felt strongly about the issue:

> "You get someone like H. [then Area Personnel Officer], 'Four hundred posts have to go. Sorry boys, that's it.'.".
>
> "Really, the manager - he's not really interested in people, I don't think. He wants to do his job well and that's that.".
>
> "See, whatever your feelings you can't really - you mustn't really - care, because you've got to do things.".

In this sense it was his opinion that managers in the NHS were comparable to those in commerce and industry.

When reviewing the interview from which these extracts were taken, a note was made that this representative did not appear to credit management with any concern about either achieving the highest standard of patient care possible or the personnel implications of individual managers decisions, but a subsequent event showed that such clear and concise conclusions can be misleading. Almost six months after the interview, Graham came to see me about arranging a meeting to discuss the implications of computer Visual Display Units for staff.

As an aside, he referred to his previous comments that managers do not care and then declared, "It's true, you know.". This was followed by a complaint about how long it was taking to provide railings to prevent cars from parking on the hospital pavements. I could only reiterate that I sympathised with his sense of frustration and entirely agreed with the arrangements he was seeking, but had to explain that I was not managerially in charge of the Works Department and therefore was powerless to directly instruct the work to proceed. He was justifiably aggrieved and I agreed with him but I am sure that he left my office no more convinced that managers cared than when he had walked in. When I examined why, I could only conclude that he little understood, or had little sympathy for, the problems of organisational constraints, or that the lack of response from the Works Department merely confirmed that management as a whole, including the Works managers, did not care.

At a further extreme, the lack of care exhibited by management was seen as expressing positive disregard for the interests of the staff. "I mean they're just not interested are they. Their word is God, and that's it, they think." commented a NUPE shop steward. One of the NALGO representatives cited the provision of a trade union office as an example of how, "It is very hard to get things out of management.". The sentiment was also voiced that the Health Authority is far from charitable with trade unions:

Researcher: Do you think that the Health Authority adopts a certain policy towards trade unions and says to all its managers ....

Mary: Oh yeah, you mean as regards the ones that are members and the ones that are not.

The Society of Radiographers' representative was unsure of whether or not there was a Health Authority 'line' with trade unions but felt

that, "they like to have a bash (laughing) at certain unions.".

To conclude the summary of the data about staff perceptions of managers as individuals, it may be particularly pertinent to quote one NUPE shop steward who turned the issue round. "I'd like to see .... management having the faith that the worker has got interest in his field, which management doesn't.".

Management Styles

In the literature, little significance is given to the part management style plays in shaping workplace relations and yet in the research interviews staff could often not think about what managers did without thinking about the way they did it. For example, the complete answer of a NUPE official to the question of what the job of manager was, previously quoted in part, was:

> "Well the job of a manager, to my way of thinking, is to supervise the whole thing right at the beginning and get everybody to try and work with him. Whereas with some people, they come in and they straightaway get your back up and you're going to be in trouble with him all the time. You know everything he does and everything you do is going to be wrong.".

A similar sentiment came from an ASTMS representative:

> "What I'm trying to say is that managers can manage affairs - I mean they ought to be able to get what they want, which ought to be the most efficient running of the enterprise, basically, right, they ought to be able to get that without appearing to be - what can you say - a large dark cloud on the horizon.".

The NUPE catering shop steward put it more practically:

> "We did feel strongly that we didn't want flexibility, where we could be moved from department to department. I mean everybody in the kitchen will. They will go out to the veg. kitchen, they will go into the pot wash, and they will help on the belt if they're needed. But they resent being told they've got to do it.".

Once again, there was a very real fear about the exercise of authoritarian management and the word 'dictatorial' appeared often. But for the representatives, the panacea was straightforward:

> "their position of management must be respected, but I don't believe a manager, in my concept anyhow, should turn round and if he is properly communicating, should not have to do any dictation. .... And society has gone on to decree that the situation is such that you have now got to manage, not necessarily all the time, by consent, and certainly by communication.".

A NALGO representative emphasised that the communication should be two-way:

> "He's got to decide the best way of doing the service. But I think there is no reason why he can't get the views of the people who will be affected and then modify his views. Now that's the secret, to modify his views.".

A NUPE officer emphasised that dictatorial management could only be avoided by forms of compromise with trade union representatives and made his point by using comparisons:

> "Everybody got to compromise. Even the union men have got to compromise. Even the union official got to compromise. Everybody got to be able to compromise, otherwise it would be - if they can't compromise they might not as well be in a job at all.".

Asked if this still meant that the manager was in charge, he replied:

> "Of course it does, yes, and it makes him a better manager if he's able to compromise. Otherwise he's only dictatorial, isn't he.".

When given a hypothetical situation, he elaborated:

> "All right, so she wants to allocate jobs, different jobs, she wants so-and-so to have their leave at such-and-such a time, and things like that. She wouldn't be able to do it all at the same time, but she'd get some of it, and then she'd have to see the point of view of others that there might be a better way of doing it.".

One of the ASTMS representatives also advocated the use of trade unions as a means of achieving managerial objectives without the exercise of authoritarian management:

> "There are and have been situations where if the management instead of coming in sort of very headlong, high profile fashion to get something implemented that wasn't going to be popular, if instead they come in in a low profile fashion and use the sympathetic offices of the unions concerned, they could have achieved the same objective with hardly any hassle at all.".

But what is the dictatorial style of management these staff were anxious should be avoided? Armstrong et al (1981:66-71) provide a sample of quotations describing authoritarian management in private enterprises:

> "Thus the works manager at Pennine: 'They can start the extra duties on Monday, Mike. If they refuse, put 'em through the disciplinary procedure.'".
>
> "Thus an MoFol foreman terminated a discussion on working methods with one of his operatives: 'I don't give a monkey's toss what Sam Austin told you, *I'm* your boss and *I'm* telling you to do it this way.'".
>
> "Thus at LEF, 'You change tools when *I* tell you, not when Ken tells you. I'm responsible for production and he's not.'"
>
> "Another instance of rule making proceeding from this wider assumption of managerial prerogative was a Pennine plant manager's, 'I take my f---ing holidays when I want to. You take yours when you're f---ing told.'".
>
> "'It says here that you've got to perform reasonable alternative work and if you don't like it, you can get out.' The MoFol personnel manager was citing the national union/employer agreement against a girl who complained.".

These few quotations compiled by Armstrong et al when compared to the attitude of the staff at Llandough are a fertile source of further enquiry. The Llandough staff described no incidents at all comparable to those, or the climate of workplace relations, described by Armstrong et al. There was no hint at all that this was the kind of management behaviour they envisaged when they described the possibility of individual managers being dictatorial. If it is true that this is not the kind of authoritarian management that they experienced, then their

conception of 'dictatorial' management is not an absolute but one extreme of their own, individual constructs of the spectrum of staff-management relationships. And yet the spectrums are not known and although it is tempting to say that they exist implicitly in the minds of the staff, if not explicitly, even this would not be true. Staff undoubtedly make judgements about whether staff-management relationships or managerial behaviour are reasonable, but they use a number of both explicit and implicit criteria, of which some are unknown and will include past experience or present experience in another sphere. But however amorphous the constructs are, they give real substance to the nature of staff-management relationships and therefore must be central to any discussions about participation.

Alternatively, it could be that the Llandough staff experience the same kind of authoritarian and insensitive management as that described by Armstrong et al, but failed to give examples or any such impression. If this was the case, one must wonder, as one does anyway with the companies described by Armstrong et al, whether any system of participation could improve either their involvement in the decision-making processes or the manner in which they are managed. It might mainly provide an additional forum for management to further antagonize the staff and enforce its dictates. A fundamental change in the position of the staff could only be achieved, with or without the introduction of any formal participative structure or process, by a metamorphosis in the general management style (although, returning to the previous hypothesis, it could be argued that the perception of having achieved a better position might last only as long as 'the bad old days' could be remembered). In other words, participation in such a context could almost be an irrelevancy.

Further evidence of the complexity of staff constructs about staff management relationships, and in particular their variability and unpredictability, is provided by Taylor's description of Michael Edwardes as the head of British Leyland (1982a:136):

> "Clearly, Edwardes has provided a firm sense of direction to a company which seemed beyond repair. He has created a climate which made it possible to press through long overdue industrial relations reforms without major union resistance.
> As Edwards told his audience in Oxford in May 1981, his aim was to create 'a framework of stability' based on a style of management starting at the top and permeating the organisation, which provided 'consistency of decision-making, which makes managers and employees feel that there will be a highly predictable response to the myriad of problems and situations that arise'.".

Taylor's description of the former head of the British Steel Corporation is similar (1982b:53):

> "Indeed, MacGregor's arrival did not herald any sudden or rapid change of strategy. For the most part, the new man endorsed the policies of his predecessor. But he brought a new style to the job, a vigorous, refreshing no-nonsense approach which won immediate sympathy from managers and workers alike.".

The key features of these descriptions seem to be the crucial significance of managerial style, identification of an ability to create the nature of workplace relations, the alleged merit in not maintaining an open-mindedness about individual problems that could affect the staff-management relationship, and the indication that the staff at least acquiesced with, and perhaps even supported, the new manner of exercising the managerial function. Subsequent events have only enhanced the sense of unpredictability and variability about staff-management relationships. But what Taylor's comments make clear is that for at least two short periods the staff's constructs of workplace relations in two different enterprises with two different managers regarded managerial behaviour as reasonable which might at other times or in other places be regarded as at or beyond the extreme.

The Management Hierarchy

In the literature about how to 'achieve' participation, the impression is often given e.g. Hebden and Shaw 1977, that there is a readily discernable decision-making structure and one of the issues that management has to resolve is at what point or points in the structure should the participative arrangements be integrated. Not only does this seem an unrealistic assumption about the nature of decision-making, but it also means that managers are led to believe that the authority system can be almost objectively defined, and this in turn means that they impose upon the staff their own perceptions of where decision-making ability or, for those more concerned with the cosmetic or manipulative, inability lies. One intention of the research, therefore, was to identify the staff's perception of who it was that made the decisions that were important to them.

The non-existence of the well-defined decision-making systems assumed by so many is emphasised by Loveridge (1976:5):

> "Organisational decisions are rarely taken, they usually emerge. There is of course a formal point at which somebody or some committee activates the formal process of implementation but even then what comes out at the end of this process is rarely what 'the decision-maker' had in mind. Asking where is the decisive action taken in this process may be possible but it is not often politic. Formally, however, there is an organisational hierarchy of some sort.".

But although this fair reeks of ozone and pollution that is the messy mixture of reality, the data rather surprisingly indicated that the existence of a formal hierarchy was of much greater significance to the staff than the few words in the last sentence might suggest.

I refer to it as rather surprising both in my capacity as a researcher and as a practising manager. As the first, I had anticipated that the staff's loci of decision-making would be highly subjective, confused and inconsistent, and as a manager I expected that the staff would perceive the decision-making ability that most affected them as the one existing within the hospital. The NHS management structure is commonly purported to be one of bureaucracy but in South Glamorgan at least, this certainly seemed to be untrue. By fairly objective criteria, such as budgetary freedom and disciplining power, management authority was considerably delegated. Furthermore, the size of the Health Authority meant that it was hardly feasible for it to be run centrally, even if that was the wish. Finally, on a personal level, one of the clearest principles governing the work of myself and the other administrators in the hospital was that we should not be seen to require any significant assistance from outside the Health Unit and that, conversely, central departments should not feel that their influence should be exercised directly with staff, but largely with us as administrators. But the existence and force of the management hierarchy were plainly in evidence as far as the staff were concerned. As an ASTMS representative observed:

> "Most of us, the bulk of us, and certainly myself, we take the view that there are distinct differences between various types of management and we consider or do not consider that some or all of them have got anything to do with us. We're not saying we agree with it as it is, not by a long way, but that's the way we see it.".

The staff's opinions about how the hierarchy operated were fairly consistent. It appeared to them that there was a high degree of central direction, and at a level with which liaison with staff representatives seemed paralysingly daunting. The local managers were the ones that the staff representatives felt able to relate to but they appeared to

lack sufficient authority. The same ASTMS representative explained the effect of what appeared to be a lack of sufficient authority at even quite a senior level, in this instance the Personnel team that met regularly with trade unions and staff organisations for formal consultation:

> "And they're quite prepared to tell us to our face that, 'Yes, we agree with this, yes we will agree to this, subject to the approval of the Area Team.'. That makes us feel that we should be talking to the Area Team.".

But in fact this is the reverse of the movement that the representative would like to see:

> "The further up the tree you go, the less room there appears to be [for managers] to manoeuvre.... The further up I go, the more rigid it becomes.".

More specifically, he considered it "a bad thing" that the Health Unit Administrator appeared to have little involvement in the management of the pathology laboratories, and the significance of this post in defining the limit of local management was reinforced by a NUPE shop steward:

> "I see it [managerial decision-making] possibly getting lost once it gets out of the hospital. I mean there's Mr Rees, who's the Sector Administrator, and I feel that once it's got to go beyond that for a decision - you're going on to Personnel and higher management levels - and I think then things start to get lost.".

When asked how often this happened, he gave one of the replies that was contrary to my managerial intention and my research expectation. He thought that it happened with a lot of concerns and gave as an example the involvement of the Central Personnel and Management Services Departments in local bargaining issues.

Other staff had an even more limited sense of the levels of management in which it was appropriate for them to get involved and this difference in outlook appeared to originate from, or be symptomatic of,

their attitudes about the nature of the supervisory function. As the NUPE catering shop steward explained:

> "If it can't be solved by the union, or the shop steward, and it's going further, then they get a little bit scared. So they would sooner sort it out with a shop steward, in the kitchen, and do it there than take it higher and fetch in management, because you are the hospital really, aren't you. I mean you're the hospital more so than the union, as far as staff is concerned.".

Whereas the first NUPE shop steward had stated, "I wouldn't personally consider my supervisor as management." because, "He can't make management decisions.", the second steward, when asked if she had ever said anything about candidates who were being interviewed for jobs in her department, but who seemed unsuitable, replied:

> "Well no, because I don't think it's my place to, is it. I mean, the appointments are really between J. [head of department] and T. [most senior ancillary supervisor].".

Thus not only did she regard her supervisor as involved in managerial decision-making but in doing so also used a phrase that to many would appear anachronistic but to her quite simply and genuinely expressed her belief in management structured as a hierarchy and the reality it has for her, both in the way her actions are determined by it and the way she contributes to its determination.

A more perverse conception of the role of the supervisors was portrayed by one of the NALGO representatives. When asked who had the most power to influence industrial relations within the hospital he replied, "Well it's really the local managers a lot. .... They may say, 'This is all wrong.' and the others will agree." and the examples he gave of the local managers he was referring to were all clerical supervisors. The use of the word manager instead of supervisor is interesting but what is of greater significance is that the NALGO representative was not describing the supervisors as the individuals who may actively generate good industrial relations, but those who may actively initiate discontent.

The fact that adequate managerial authority did not rest at a sufficiently local level was also borne out by those who compared the existing management arrangements with those of several years previously. One NUPE shop steward placed the change in an even wider context:

Paul: Management is not like management years ago, insomuch as so long as you had your three 'R's - reading, 'rithmetic, you know, and your matriculation then, it wasn't your eleven plus and your 'O' levels and university then - a manager was a manager. There were three men in the Valleys; it was the manager of the colliery, the doctor and the minister. You took your hat off to them, perhaps the agent of the company, the coal company. You took your hat off to them because they were respected. They were men that held office perhaps in local government, which was a big thing then, and every man and women, 'Oh, it's Mr Jones.', or Mr Evans, or Dr Brown, or whatever it is.

There had also apparently been a similarly clear structure of authority in the hospital:

Paul: Now in this hospital, now, there again you revert to the old days - one secretary that had the power. You had one doctor, I forget his name, but in Sully it was Foamer, Medical er...

Researcher: Dr Morgan it was here, Dr David Morgan.

Paul: Yeah, and he dictated too, him. Now we could have settled our differences without going to the Authority then, because he had the power to do so. You lack that power today. He can't make a decision. Why? Because he's got to refer to the Temple of Peace [Authority central office].

He went on to comment that, "This hospital was a much better hospital when we were dealing direct with the Welsh Office.".

An ASTMS representative similarly wished for the return of the time when within the pathology laboratory one consultant pathologist and the most senior technician were in charge and the hospital was run by a secretary, matron and medical superintendent:

Eric: Nothing ever happened. We didn't have industrial disputes and we didn't have union meetings as such. .... There wasn't any bother. Any problems were sorted out on the spot, within the Unit, and we never had to go outside the Unit to sort a problem, no matter how big it was. So everybody felt close to the decision-making. They all felt that the people on site had the authority to deal with anything, which they apparently did.

Researcher: So what changed?

Eric: What changed, so far as we're concerned, is that the people who made the decisions lost their ability, or their authority, to make those decisions, and the decision-making process moved further away, essentially.

Some staff shed light on where they envisaged that authority now lay. One NUPE shop steward was asked how much he thought was felt in the hospital of what went on higher up. Once again, the perception of a management hierarchy was evident not only in the answer but in the anachronistic terminology used:

> "Oh you feel it, you feel it. I know what's going on higher up, even though you don't admit it to me, but you'd admit it to another man in your station.".

This was the same NUPE official as the one who had described the clear authority structure in the Valleys and the following extracts from his replies to questions about the location of authority within South Glamorgan Health Authority demonstrate just how much that simple clarity is now missing:

"H. is the spokesman for the Authority. The Authority themselves know nothing at all about the problems.".

"H. will do what he's told, like every other person underneath the Health Authority.".

"A certain amount of decisions H. can wield, yes, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, he's a man that's controlled like everybody else in the Health Authority.".

"You never get a satisfactory answer from the Authority. They beat about the bush; it's handed down pillar to post.".

"Myself, I think the Authority's too big, because this is an industrial belt. You've got too many hospitals under the one authority, too many departments, and they're all getting so mixed up in the administration, in the higher administration of it, and it's just a lot of bumph, that it's just getting thrown down the drain.".

"I'll speak now, and this is just with us now. You've got councillors now, and I know them. I was on the Council before. They know nothing at all about it, and yet those are the people that sit on the Health Authority. I know more about it than them. They've got to be guided, and if the fellow that's guiding them is a bit underhanded, he can force any situation to be brought about.".

When asked if he had any sympathy for H. he replied:

"Well he asked for it, sir, that's the job he wanted, and he's got it. We don't trust H. from here to there, and I'm not ashamed to admit that.".

A NALGO representative was clearer in her mind about where real authority lay, but equally powerfully, albeit more succinctly, demonstrated the distance between senior managers and the ordinary staff:

"I would have said the Area Team was the top management, not the Health Authority.".

"I think of the Health Authority as something up there that more or less goes its own way. Just a decision-making body and we just have to follow.".

Two fundamental features of the hierarchal system were particularly apparent to the representatives. These were the need to accept instructions and to be accountable:

"he [a manager] has to do what his superiors ask him to do. I mean it's all built up and you have to obey, don't you. That's the point.".

"you're dictated to by policies. Even our Authority is dictated to to a certain extent. Let them over-spend and who clamps down on them? A higher authority.".

"They've got to obey the higher-ups again, who in their wisdom dictate a policy from a higher realm again.".

"I feel that really speaking, you - no disrespect to you yourself - but you're given a brief, and invariably that can be summed up, 'No, Ian.', and that you've got to dress up to tell these guys.".

The constraints perceived to be imposed by higher management seemed to relate entirely to finance. An ASTMS representative, for example, assumed that all managers had been told to stop all overtime and a NUPE shop steward more accurately commented that instructions had been received to reduce staffing levels through redundancies, and he continued:

Colin: Oh, I believe you must have some kind of instructions, on industrial relations. I think you are bound to have, right back to courses, I mean er...

Researcher: I just wondered if you felt that there might be some sort of almost a Health Authority line about certain things?

Colin: Personally, I think there must be. It's never come to light, but I think there must be some kind of guidelines laid down to administrators.

The eloquence of the NUPE official from the Valleys was especially evident when he talked about the effect on management of financial constraints:

Researcher: Is there is anything you think can be done to actually narrow the gap between staff and management?

Paul: No, not really, because you're restricted to dictates from a higher field.

Researcher: What sort of dictates do you think we're under?

Paul: Economy. You'd be a decent bloke if you didn't have that cloud over your head. Now because you've got to scheme, sir, and don't tell me you haven't, you've got to scheme ways and means of saving money. It's thrust at you every day, every meeting you go to, 'Oh, we can't have that, it's got to wait. We can't have this, that's got to wait.', and you're trying to appease the consultants here in their demands, the laboratories in their demands. They all want. They want because they've got a need. Now, if the need was excessive, you'd clamp down and that's your excuse, 'No, you can't have it. You had so-and-so last year, and somebody else wants it.'. But that doesn't happen, and you're getting these departments that are keeping on to you, keeping on to you, making you in a kind of aggressive attitude when you're dealing with people now that you can control. That's us, the ancillary staff. We don't need anything, just a basic way of life. We're just the peasants of the Health Service. And it's true, we're the ones with straw in our mouths and a silly cap on our heads, and driving a cow up the streets, and if you could give us a bag of potatoes, you'd give us a bag of potatoes.".

The significance of the financial imperative compared to any others was highlighted by another NUPE shop steward:

Carol: Well you sit in on meetings where you discuss sort of things and they're bound to say that your hospital is not running as it should be run. Or, "Can't you do so-and-so.'.

Researcher: Who do you think says that?

Carol: Well I don't know.

Researcher: You seem to be implying that we have to explain the way we're running the hospital.

Carol: No, no, I didn't mean the running like that. I meant costings for the hospital.

Another NUPE shop steward concluded:

> "We look at it in one way - we want to give a good service to the patients. End. Whereby you've got to give a service and be able to afford it.".

Managerial Prerogative

This chapter has so far considered some staff perceptions of managers and the management function, but to what extent does management actually take account of staff attitudes towards what it tries to do? Is the exercise of managerial prerogative possible, perhaps in the form of dictatorial management that concerns staff representatives so much, and if it is not, by what means can management attain its goals? These issues bear substantially both on the conduct of industrial relations generally and participation in particular. Walker, for example, has identified that one of the principal perspectives in which participation may be regarded is as, "an illegitimate intrusion upon managerial prerogatives" (1974:7). Indeed, in its proposals for extending participation at work the Confederation of British Industry is anxious to emphasise the necessity of retaining managerial rights and authority:

> "it is important to remember that where joint agreement has been sought, but not achieved, management's duty to take a decision, in the interests of the business, remains unimpaired." (1977:36).

> "The arrangements agreed must not interfere with the executive function of management and must recognise that management has the ultimate legal responsibility for discharging its third party obligations." (p 32).

And the notion of managerial prerogative is not merely an obsolete inheritance from an age when the employing relationship was like that described by the Webbs:

> "it being always implied in the engagement that the workman accepts the conditions existing in the employer's establishment, and obeys all his lawful commands." (1898:658).

It is a concept with vitality and relevance. During a national railway dispute, Tether (1982) reported that:

> "The Board it seems, had 'reached the end of the road on prevarication'. Accordingly, negotiations were out. The issue now - or so we were informed - was about 'management's right to manage.'".

He calls this a "god" and refers to, "British Rail's decision to invoke this deity". More parochially, at the time when new district health authorities were being established throughout the NHS, the Association of Health Service Treasurers (1982) advocated that the opportunity should be taken to review the most important personnel procedures, "in order to enable managers to manage effectively.". The Association was particularly concerned that procedures for resolving grievances should be re-examined:

> "But the next question to be answered is what constitutes a grievance? Should we not specifically exclude certain matters? There should certainly be areas of 'management prerogative'".

Furthermore, the Association has a very clear picture of what this implies in practice:

> "i.e. certain areas in which management should be free to operate unfettered by staff questioning and which should clearly be referred to in the grievance procedure. One such area is the way in which an employee is to carry out his or her job, i.e. an employee should not be given the right of appeal against the manager's decision that task A should be performed before task B or against a decision that these tasks are to be performed using certain prescribed methods (except, of course, on any grounds of health and safety).".

The exercise of managerial prerogative where there can be no property rights i.e. in a public enterprise, has been defended by O'Donnell (1952:587):

> "What is the authority relationship of managers and subordinates in this activity? All subordinates have a duty to obey the lawful commands of their superior managers because the right to issue such orders descends from the people as a whole through the Constitution to the federal government which has approved the project. The use of coercive methods to secure acceptance of orders is the manager's right. The recalcitrant subordinate can and should be deprived of employment in this enterprise if he disobeys commands, for he not only endangers the success of the firm in achieving its objectives but he may not, as an individual, decide issues which are the prerogative of the collective will.".

Unfortunately, the absoluteness of the managerial power supposedly deriving from the collective will obscures a more general and fertile insight into the nature of public service management which was touched upon in the description of the research initiative. It was suggested there not that greater power might accrue to managers acting as the agents of the collective will but that the staff - management relationship might be more amicable because management would be exercising its function solely for the common good, although in practice it appears that this correlation may be totally unfounded.

Young (1963) describes how management's right to manage has legal authority derived from property rights, when in fact he personally regards this assertion as spurious. What is more important for him is the validation of managerial prerogatives in organisational terms, to provide direction and leadership:

> "And yet the managerial assertion that it has the right to run the organisation contains a certain economic logic. In the large independent business firm which hires many employees, it would be inefficient and impractical if the manager and employee had to achieve a meeting of minds over every decision before it could be implemented." (p 245).

More generally, there is a strong argument that the managers of an enterprise hold the responsibility for its success, whether on behalf of owners or another collectivity or even if only to justify their employment as its co-ordinators and leaders, and that the responsibility must be accompanied by authority. This can alternatively be described as management requiring the authority to meet its commitment to the organisation, or its identification with its objectives, or obligation to act in its interests.

To advance the necessity for managerial authority in this way may seem non-ideological and common sense but in fact there are critics, such as Marcuse, who has argued (1969) that such authority is a rational necessity where there is division of labour and it is used to further the general good but that it otherwise constitutes domination of an ideological kind. However, the greatest pertinence of this argument appears to be its corollary i.e. that some co-ordinating, supervising and directing function is required within any organisation, however politically, socially or morally laudible its aims may be, and indeed it appears to be impossible to think of any forms of human society in which these functions have not been necessary.

There is actually some agreement that in practice management prerogatives are still considerably intact, although there is dispute about their limits, both at the workplace and between commentators, and neither is there agreement about how the limits are formed. For example, the contention that managerial authority had been reduced very little is supported by Armstrong et al and one particularly important reason for this is the strength of its force in strategic decision-making, which (1981:40), "ensures that any ensuing negotiations

take place within perameters which have already been unilaterally determined.". Chamberlain uses a different analysis (1967:198):

> "industrial jurisprudence, which consists of all the collective bargaining agreements and its interpretations, accepted practices which are not subject to unilateral change, and understandings which are jointly respected, thus constitutes part of the framework defining management prerogatives. Within that framework, management retains freedom of operation.".

This conveys more of the complexity of workplace organisation and the suggestion that consequently managerial prerogatives are mutually defined, even if only by tacit acquiescence, but in fact both commentries suggest a clarity that does not exist. Armstrong et al are right to remind us that employer-employee relationships at the workplace can be strongly influenced by the characteristics of a wider context, but they are wrong to suggest that just one issue, namely strategic decision-making, is the dominant influence, or that this activity can be conceptually isolated. It may be possible to identify strategic decisions and non-strategic decisions but there can be no decisions which are solely strategic. They nearly always have ramifications at several levels and thus become operational decisions or decisions which have operational consequences. The decision to replace real ale by keg beer is one which Armstrong et al would presumably describe as strategic and it was certainly one in which the consumer was not involved, but it has now been reversed, both by the action of individual consumers and the activity of the most successful consumer organisation ever.

Chamberlain's error is of giving the impression that the features of workplace organisation not determined solely by managerial prerogatives can be so clearly identified that they could almost be topographically represented and the area still subject to managerial

prerogative printed in a different colour. He assumes that there would be agreement about all the items that would fall within the three main categories he describes, that the interpretations, accepted practices and understandings relating to specific topics would be equally mutually agreed, and that the organisation of workplace relationships is static, and these are all obviously false assumptions. Management may maintain a belief in certain prerogatives only to find that they do not exist when tested or they may find that one type of action unchallenged on one occasion is contested on another. There may be losses and gains by both staff and management which neither is aware of. Managerial or working practices may exist which the other side is prepared to tolerate informally but which it could not concede on a formal basis. There will also be differences within the different levels of management and trade union organisations about the prerogatives that management may or may not exercise.

Such considerations mean that summarising the areas of managerial prerogative creates not merely a semantic problem but a conceptual one as well. Nevertheless, prerogatives do exist and have sometimes been very publically demonstrated to exist. It has also been argued that managerial power is little diminished if the owners or management have the ability to end the existence of the employing enterprise, particularly if it is despite or because of staff and trade union opposition. It has been commonplace to hear of companies ceasing production, often in the face of short-lived and unsuccessful opposition from their workforces, and there have been a number of highly publicised occasions when employees of some of the largest companies have been given a choice of accepting unattractive changes in their terms and conditions of service or forcing the closure of the company. In at least two instances,

at Odhams Press and Ansells Brewery, production has permanently ceased during the middle of industrial action about terms and conditions of service.

Although deprived of such extreme options, the local research data indicated that the shop stewards felt that the Health Authority's senior management wielded considerable power without opposition. Referring to Area officers generally, one NUPE shop steward explained, "They just don't want to listen, do they. I mean H. is noted for it, isn't he.". In the more specific context of how H. handled the exercise of losing four hundred posts, which necessitated some redundancies, a NALGO representative described how:

> "He did it so that he wouldn't have any long discussions. He wouldn't have a drawn out discussion and perhaps a weakening of his position by consultation. Just presented it as a fait accompli, 'That's it.', and the unions either had to accept it or get together and make some action. So it was a sort of blunderbuss approach that worked very well. I think his approach was sort of to blunderbuss it through, which he did, and the unions weren't organised enough really, or concerted enough in their actions. It was just such a surprise.".

The Society of Radiographers' representative referred to a NUPE representative who had walked out of the meeting at which H. had announced the redundancies to the shop stewards and staff representatives:

> "He wouldn't discuss matters with H., which I thought was really silly, because if you don't discuss it how d'you know what he is going to do, because he said straight, 'Well whether you stay or not, I'm going to do it'.".

Another NALGO representative commented:

> "There seems to be, as far as I can understand from what we're told at the executive meetings, that major policies are announced by South Glamorgan and really NALGO don't have much say. I don't know whether there is a lot of negotiating going on that we don't know about.".

When asked if there was consultation she replied, "Well is it consultation when you're sort of taken to a meeting and just told?". An identical sentiment was expressed by one of the NUPE shop stewards but this time it related to her head of department, who was in fact the same NALGO representative:

> "When we have the changeover in the beginning of the year, I would like to sort of be - I won't say involved in it, because obviously she's going to put the girls where she wants - but it would be nice to be able to know what is happening before you're actually told it in a meeting.".

However, the greatest significance of this statement is that in it a senior shop steward affirms the head of department's ability to allocate staff to duties without questioning or opposition. Other representatives gave further examples of managerial decision-making they would obey even if they did not agree with it. One NUPE shop steward explained that she would always do as she was told by the administrator, which was why she had cooked meals to be given free to members of staff working in the hospital while it was snowbound, although she disagreed with the instruction. The same steward also declared that she would never challenge the appointment of a member of staff, however strongly she felt that a wrong decision was being made, and an ASTMS representative similarly believed that, "It is management's undoubted and absolute right to decide who they employ.", although he could think of no other absolute managerial prerogative.

Some managements have attempted to obtain ratification of their right to manage in formal agreements with trade unions. Reference has already been made to the desire of the Association of Health Service Treasurers to formally identify the areas of managerial prerogatives and Goodrich (1975:56-9) provides examples of written statements of

managerial authority that have actually been introduced. But such statements and agreements appear to be of little force in their own right. Clegg (1979:121) confirms that:

> "a great many agreements, especially in recent years, specify rules governing particular aspects of work, and the obligations of employees to accept managerial decisions on specific matters. In practice, these rules are sometimes repudiated by trade unionists even though they have been signed by their unions. But much more commonly the rules are circumvented.".

Such restrictions on managerial authority will usually arise from the pragmatic concerns of staff but the research data reveals that they also originate from the need to protect what are regarded as the minimal rights of employees and to achieve a reasonable return on the goodwill exercised by staff which is to management's benefit. An ASTMS representative explained the first:

> "It seemed to be that because there was no organised representation there was a gradual drift, from agreement about things to dictation about things. But I couldn't find a valid reason to explain it except the fact that there was no longer any organised opposition. And that's a bad word, 'opposition' - I don't like the word - but that's what seemed to be the case. Because we had no organisation at all, or no representation at all, no central points of contact between the staff as a group and the management as a group, the management began to expand their sphere of influence, to the point where they began to forget that they were maybe eroding some of the rights that members of staff had.".

A NALGO representative saw clearly the value of goodwill as industrial relations currency and mentioned how it may have influenced the introduction of rostered Saturday morning working:

> "I think that, for instance, they may have thought twice about introducing it, just unilaterally about this, because they may have felt there would be a backlash. And obviously, you also want the goodwill of people, because lots of things go on in this hospital, the service I mean, which is all goodwill. I mean, for instance, we separate specimens on call, we answer queries. If we said, "Right, we're only going to do what we're called in for.', well the service suffers.".

But while it may seem reasonable that absolute managerial prerogatives have gone the way of the divine right of kings and management is apparently now by consent, it could mean that industrial relations power is confused. At the extremes this could produce managerial paralysis or constant industrial guerilla warfare, and this was recognised in the report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employeees' Associations (1968 para 390):

> "there is considerable confusion as to what management does and does not have the right to do; or, where it is conceded to have the right, whether it is or is not making reasonable use of it.".

It seemed essential to try and resolve this confusion if any insight was to be gained into how the managerial function could be exercised with increased participation. Should participation supplement, replace or defer to all the other ways in which staff affect the exercise of the managerial function, and in any case what authority does management have left if it is subject to successful challenges? The data showed that staff attitudes to managerial authority were ambiguous and the methodological lesson was learned that if one presupposes that a consistent conclusion is available to be discovered there is then a very strong possibility that it leads the research participants to either become confused about their own ideas or reach logical conclusions which do not accurately reflect their own beliefs.

On a general level, it did indeed seem that industrial chaos could not be far away because the trade union and staff organisation representatives described little restriction on the managerial activity that they were prepared to challenge. To one NUPE official it was simple - "your're in a position to dictate, and its in other people's position whether to accept or not." - as it was for another NUPE shop steward:

> "There again, why should she make all the decisions, perhaps be wrong against the girls from what the girls can see, and just let her get away with it? Why shouldn't the girls have somebody to stand for them if they feel they should?".

Neither would consultation reduce her inclination to challenge management if she felt strongly enough. She had commented:

> "Well it's her decision isn't it, at the end of the day, unless it was something I felt was radically wrong. It would still be her decision, although you've discussed it."

and when asked what she would do if she thought it was radically wrong, she replied:

> "Well then I wouldn't agree with it - and take it from there.".

Other shop stewards and staff representatives expressed similar views and could not think of any managerial decisions that they would not challenge if necessary. Yet these were the very same people that appeared to be genuinely convinced of the existence of 'the right to manage'. The contradiction became even more obvious when they were subsequently asked if they would ever challenge the appointment of a new member of staff by management and none of them said that they would.

The full ambiguity of the belief of staff in the right to manage and the right to challenge the right to manage is best illustrated by extracts at length from individual interviews. One NUPE shop steward was initially defensive about questioning managerial decisions:

Bernard: If you didn't have the right to challenge what was being said, sometimes, then management could just go away - they could just do what they liked.".

"They can challenge it but they aren't necessarily going to win it, are they".

"I think that surely the unions really only challenge where management oversteps that mark, that law. (long pause) So from my point

of view I wouldn't challenge a manager's right to manage, as long as they managed in accordance with the law.".

He then recognised that in fact there was much else that he would dispute, such as staffing levels, terms and conditions of service and the level of overtime, as the following extract shows:

Researcher: I might decide as a manager that we only need - I can't even remember off-hand how many ODAs there are - but supposing I as a manager said, 'We only need five ODAs.' and you disagree with me?

Bernard: Right. So as the right to manage, you make a decision to say that you only need five, then I would say that the union side have got a right to argue with management if they think that they want more than five. But then it's a question of negotiation, isn't it. You have put the case forward, both sides have to put the case forward.

Even after this he asserted:

> "I've never disputed the fact that the manager's got the right to manage."

But when pushed further he qualified his stance:

> "The managers have the right to manage but if we're not happy with what's being done, then no, I think we have the right to challenge them."

One of the ASTMS representatives was similarly led into recognising the apparent contradiction in his beliefs:

Eric: I accept that the manager, first of all he has the right to manage.

Researcher: What does that mean?

Eric: To me that means he has the right, in the end, to go his own way.

Researcher: You say 'a right', but in fact if he decided to go his own way you might still oppose him.

Eric: Oh, yes.

Researcher: So does that mean it is a right?

Eric: Well what I mean is that he has the ability to decide in which direction he will go and having decided that, he can go in that direction.

Researcher: If you're going to oppose him, how can he achieve it?

Eric: Well, if we're going to oppose him then, as I say, he can try to go in that direction. If he doesn't achieve it, it simply means that in that particular issue at that particular point in time we had better arguments than he did - or we had better guns that he did. Right?

Another NUPE shop steward resisted the influence to achieve a logically consistent conclusion and in doing so demonstrated that the ambiguity about managerial authority has real meaning:

Researcher: If you are prepared to challenge her if you feel strongly enough about it, what authority has she got to make decisions then? In other words, aren't you saying she has only got authority to make decisions if you agree with her?

Dilys: No, I think you're taking that wrong really. If S. makes a decision, she makes a decision. Say for example, the girls can only have a week's holiday a year in the summer, in the peak period, well wouldn't you - I mean any trade union - well I would personally, I would challenge that. Because I would have felt in that case that the girls should have had two weeks. But I mean it's not taking S.'s authority away from her at all.

Researcher: If you say it's not challenging her authority, what does her authority mean?

Dilys: Well it is challenging her authority on one particular point, but it's not challenging her authority in general, is it.

This shop steward had an obvious respect for her head of department and a number of times emphasised that she was:

> "not challenging S.'s authority at all, but perhaps just one particular decision that she's made, which I wouldn't say was her authority anyway.".

When asked if her authority was undermined if she was challenged frequently, she replied:

> "Well if it happened very frequently it wouldn't be a very good manager, would it, because a good manager isn't going to make decisions that people have got to challenge all the time, is she.".

The same shop steward also urged that trade union involvement in management should be seen in proper proportion:

> "Well I mean, do you ask the trade union for every decision you make, for everything you say, do you go to the trade unions? Of course you don't. It's only certain things, isn't it, that you have to go to trade unions, so your authority's here in this hospital, isn't it.".

Nevertheless her propensity to challenge was unfettered:

> "I don't see that it should be all management's say and, "Right, the girls do this and this and this.', without any representation from the staff to say what they feel.".

Researcher: Are there any things which you would never challenge?

Dilys: Well if I think management's got the right, I say to the girls, 'I think they've got the right.'.

Researcher: What sort of things then?

Dilys: Well there again I haven't really come up against that.

Researcher: No, what I mean is, are there some things, nor necessarily where you might just agree with management, but where you actually think, 'It's not appropriate for a trade union to say anything. That is management's right to do that, whether I agree with it or not. That is management's prerogative.'? Is there anything like that?

Dilys: Well I haven't come across it. I don't say I won't (laughing), but I haven't so far.

Armstrong et al are among the few commentators who have addressed themselves to the ambiguity contained in these interviews, and they summarise it accurately:

> "Few of them nowadays would accept managerial power or the pursuit of profit without qualification - although it is important to stress that qualification is not the same thing as rejection." (1981:42).

They add (1981:66):

> "It is important to note that workers frequently find it necessary and consider it legitimate to distinguish between their generalised 'duty to obey' and their 'duty to obey' specific managerial instructions in specific situations. Thus a generalised acceptance of management's prerogative to discipline individual workers seldom extends to an acceptance of each and every instance of that prerogative being exercised. When unconvinced, well-organised workers are perfectly capable of resisting managers' 'legal rights'. Even at the individual level workers may resist the right of managers to decide the content of their work.".

The inability of the representatives to articulate this distinction is not surprising, particularly since, as Goodrich identifies (1975:56), the issues that staff and trade unions feel that it is appropriate to influence or challenge are, "more a matter of accepted custom than of precisely stated principle.".

One NALGO representative summarised the situation very pithily:

> "I think that if management's fair, that's all right. You just decide that you're fair and you say, "Oh, well I'm - that will have to be.'. But of course in lots of circumstances you've got to give and take.".

Unfortunately, what is equally obvious is that participants in industrial relations often do not share the same perceptions of when those different circumstances exist or of what it is that is giveable and what it is that is takeable. Paster (1954:115) touches on this dilemma within the

context of formal negotiations:

> "The management representative has in mind the limits to which he will go and beyond which he will not go, even if it means a strike. The union representative has in mind consessions from management which he regards as essential if the negotiations are not to end in a strike. Neither negotiator knows what the true limits of the other are.".

The NALGO representative's statement that there are some issues about which management must exercise some give and take has two important consequences. One of them has been identified by Armstrong et al (1981:64):

> "Thus it needs to be re-asserted that rule making begins as a management process and that it becomes material for 'industrial relations' only as an 'exception' and by way of reaction to the background process of management rule-making."

i.e. the initiative lies with management. The other significant feature of this arrangement is that there may be a high degree of unpredictability about what workers are prepared to tolerate without question.

However, this spontaneity not only occurs in response to what is essentially a managerially-determined rule-making process but also from within relationships very much governed by workers' beliefs in the legitimacy of the authority of management, as the research interviews clearly illustrated. This in turn means that management can indeed exercise prerogative power, or prerogatives which may be called 'as if' prerogatives. That is, there may be no absolute prerogatives but if management acts as if they do exist the response from the staff will often be confirmatory, and again this was well demonstrated by the research data. The notion of 'as if' prerogatives is also of course readily inferred from an interactionist analysis and consistent with the distinction previously stated between the concepts of power and authority.

Marchington (1980:169) relates the strength of the effects of the exercise of as if prerogatives with workers' desire to participate:

> "we can again draw attention to employees' apathy towards participation in management decision-making and argue that it may be precisely because they feel it to be a prerogative of management that their propensity to participate is so low.".

It is therefore misleading for Daniel and McIntosh (1972:198) to argue that:

> "Any management prerogative to manage is ultimately based on the agreement of the managed and increasingly management will have to earn and will that agreement rather than claim it as of right by virtue of its position.".

There can be an enormous difference between "agreement" in the sense of having considered an issue and decided not to oppose it, and uncritical acquiescence. It would thus be wrong to suggest that when there is no disagreement there is agreement, and pragmatic management may be as much if not more concerned with maintaining this pacifity and so prevent issues becoming ones of potential conflict, rather than positively seeking to reach agreement on issues which have already generated conflict.

This distinction between acquiescence with, rather than agreement on, the exercise of as if prerogatives becomes very apparent when there is a major challenge to managerial decision-making and management articulates the belief that ultimately it is defending the right to manage. It never provokes a sympathetic response from the trade unions or staff and even those who identify with managerial objectives, e.g. Tether (1982), may denigrate such a defence for the imposition of the management will.

In practice, there can be large areas of workplace activity governed by the exercise of as if prerogatives but it is extremely unlikely that

they will govern every aspect and there has been an increase in the number and type of issues about which workers are no longer prepared to acquiesce. Management has been more concerned with the pragmatic rather than principled exercise of its function and this has meant that:

> "Since the 1960s this confusion over the rights of management has been resolved, at least in part, by the gradual extension of collective bargaining over issues of substance which were once determined unilaterally by employers. This trend, though gradual and uneven, has been positively encouraged by public policy." (Hawkins 1979:161).

For a number of reasons, decision-making became increasingly not only about what to achieve but also how to achieve it:

> "The distinction between negotiation and consultation had *de facto* become obsolete, and management had recognized that to get the right decisions taken, accepted and implemented was more important than prerogatives; that they could not get change unless all parties accepted change and were prepared to play their part, which required reaching agreement across the whole range of issues."
> (Daniel and McIntosh 1972:81).

The point at which it is no longer possible to successfully exercise as if prerogatives, and either joint agreement is necessary or unilateral action by workers is possible, is often called the frontier of control. As a description, this phrase is misleading but it provides a label for a very useful concept. It should now be obvious that there are not just two types of control, that which management exercises and that which management does not or shares, each on one side of a solid, fixed line or definition. In reality, the distinction is sometimes very clear and sometimes a barely perceptible gradation of influence. The extent of control also differs with individuals, over issues, with time and in the perceptions of both individuals and interested collectivities. It may often be unknown or even located in

different places by different individuals, with the differing definition of each unknown to the others. Batstone et al (1977:241) recognised that, "the frontier of control is not stable." and this is emphasised by Hyman (1975:25):

> "in every workplace there exists an invisible frontier of control, reducing some of the formal powers of the employer: a frontier which is defined and re-defined in a *continuous* process of pressure and counter-pressure, conflict and accommodation, overt and tacit struggle.".

But there is scepticism about whether the diminution in the power of management is of any real significance and whether workers are prepared to alter the balance of power so substantially anyway. Indeed, it would appear that this is the orientation supported by the research data, and once again Hyman accurately anticipates it (1977:97):

> "The employer continues to make the fundamental policy decisions, while the control which workers have carved out impinges only on the implementation of this policy. Indeed, management is normally able to tolerate this situation precisely because the workers themselves - or at least their shop floor representatives - realise that their restrictions on management must not go 'too far'.".

However, both the participants in the research and Hyman underestimate two of the characteristics of workplace organisations. One is that for management the means of implementation are just as important as the decision-making process itself, and secondly, staff may have no overt wish to fundamentally threaten management's authority yet have no regard for what may be the logical consequences of constantly challenging management on a pragmatic basis. What becomes clear is that the definition of what is negotiable is itself negotiable, can be manipulated, and is subject to change by a whole host of industrial relation factors. On a practical level, it may be possible to subsume collective bargaining and the ever-dynamic process of accommodation at

the workplace under the category of industrial relations activity labelled 'participation'. On a more general level, the definition of what is negotiable will strongly influence the content of participation systems at the same time as participation contributes to the definition; the participation can be used by all of those involved in it to maintain or alter their definition of what is negotiable; and participation is both a manifestation of other industrial relations influences and one of them.

Chapter Six

TRADE UNIONS - PERCEPTIONS OF MOTIVATION AND METHODS

The relationship between participation and trade union activity is one of some considerable ambivalence. On the one hand, for many managers one of the key objectives of participation is to reduce or circumvent trade union activity, and on the other hand trade union activity can be a fundamental form of participation in action. For managers who wish to improve their participative systems this in turn raises the problem of whether to do so by involving staff directly or by using the existing trade union structure. Many commentators (e.g. Daniel and McIntosh 1972, Purcell 1979, TUC 1979) have argued that where a trade union organisation already exists any participative arrangements which do not give it a substantial function could not, and would not be allowed to, compete successfully. Lately, however, it has been argued (e.g. Institute of Directors 1983, SDP 1982) that the alleged decline in the state of industrial relations in Britain in recent years has been partly attributable to management relying exclusively on its liaison with trade unions to communicate with its workforce.

The exercise of trade union initiative would be worthy of investigation within the context of research into participation if it did nothing other than contribute to the analysis of these conflicting opinions, but such enquiries can also reveal important local data with a bearing on arrangements for participation. They can reveal examples of specific issues that cause concern to individual members, or groups,

of staff or their representatives; they may reveal features of the way in which the management function is undertaken that the staff find unsatisfactory; and they may be a further means of establishing the nature of the staff's general constructs of the employing relationship.

The extent of trade union membership and activity in the NHS is typical of much of that in the public sector generally. The proportion of staff belonging to a staff organisation or trade union is high, there is a comprehensive system of local representatives, and the trade unions representing the ancillary or manual staff are amongst those known to be the most active in the trade union movement nationally. Llandough Hospital is no exception to this description.

Affiliation

The NUPE shop stewards in particular had a strong belief in the ability and strength of their union. At the beginning of an interview with one NUPE shop steward, for example, some very general questions designed to be of little consequence were asked in order to relax the shop steward. She had been in NUPE for some years and the comment was made that, "You've seen a change in ten years I suppose?", to which the shop steward replied with considerable confidence and emphasis, "Yes, we're stronger.". The forcefulness with which this was said is perhaps difficult to convey but the use of a personal rather than impersonal pronoun is additionally indicative.

The same shop steward was later asked:

Researcher: People in this hospital, just talking generally, seem to have great deal of faith in NUPE. Why do you think that is?

Mary: We have got a good union, you know.

Researcher: What makes it a good union then, in your eyes?

Mary: Well, it's a union you can depend on, for a start. You know, if anything goes wrong you've got union officers on call. I mean, you can just pick up a 'phone if there's anything that we don't know, we can't handle. You can just pick up a 'phone, and more often than not you can get them out, which is good I suppose.

It is interesting to note the mention of the union's on-call system and one wonders whether this is standard trade union practice, reflecting the urgent demands of a twenty-four hour service, or whether it is a form of imitation of the medical milieu in which the representatives find themselves.

The intensity of this shop steward's loyalty to her union was demonstrated during a meeting with all the shop stewards and staff representatives who had been involved in the research. She said nothing during the meeting until disagreement began to show between two NUPE shop stewards and one of them agreed that it was because of NUPE that the health authority had altered one of its policies relating to staff and this had been to the detriment of some union members. At this point, Mary spoke for the first time and said, "Once you start running down your own union you might as well give in to them.". During an interview another shop steward almost seemed to imply that NUPE was one of the more moderate trade unions. The observation was made that, "NUPE does have a reputation for being probably one of the most extreme unions in the Health Service.", to which she replied, "But NUPE seems to get it all solved without sort

of going as far as say the miners' union, and things like that.".

From day-to-day contact with staff it appeared that the ordinary members regarded the union with equally high esteem and this was confirmed by the shop stewards. However, this reflected rather more on the shop stewards than the union organisation as a whole and there were some shop stewards who were both surprised at the level of trust that was placed upon them by their members and unclear about why they were so highly regarded. One shop steward remarked, "It's marvellous, really, because I can say 99% have got faith in the shop steward.", and another shop steward who was asked why staff went to her with problems rather than their supervisors replied, "I think they must think that I can sort of solve things better than them because I'm shop steward.", although she could think of no reason why staff should make this judgement.

There was one obvious inference to be made from the evidence and statements of the strength of support for NUPE and this was put to one of its shop stewards:

Researcher: It is surprising how strongly people feel about their union and I must admit that there are some people in the hospital who have a fantastic faith in NUPE. Doesn't that imply there's something radically wrong with the way the place is being run?

Colin: No, I don't think so, not in that respect. You've got some who've fantastic faith in NUPE because perhaps NUPE did something that was really good for them at one time.

Purpose

Defence of interests

This answer is a not entirely satisfactory explanation for the high standing of the union amongst the staff but more positive responses were elicited from the shop stewards and staff representatives who were asked what difference it would make if there were no trade unions in the hospital. Only the Society of Radiographers' representative said it would be, "Possibly very little, to be quite frank, as we are, in this hospital.", and this was largely because she considered that the main purpose of the Society was to negotiate nationally about pay and terms and conditions of service. Other shop stewards and staff representatives were certain that the activities of their organisations were an important check on the activity of management and cited examples that indicated that this was of particular relevance at local level. In reply to the question, "Why do you think you need a shop steward, or a trade union for that matter?", one NUPE shop steward answered, "To stick up for your rights, isn't it.". To clarify this a little, she was asked:

Researcher: Well put it this way then. What would happen do you think if there was no trade union, or if there were no shop stewards?

Mary: Well they'd just walk over you, not just here but everywhere.

She was unable to explain what she meant by this in general terms but gave the example of how individuals in her department were reluctant on their own to ask their departmental manager for time off. She continued by stating, "I think a lot of things would get pushed under the carpet if it wasn't for trade unions.", and gave the allocation of leave and accidents at work as further examples.

Another NUPE shop steward felt that, "I think if there was no trade union the girls would have nothing to fall back on, nothing to help them.". She shared the worst fears of those concerned about the behaviour of management in the absence of unions, as these questions and answers show:

Researcher: Some people think that management might even actually positively exploit the staff if there were no trade unions.

Dilys: Well I think it would come to that.

Researcher: How do you think they could?

Dilys: Well there's so many ways. There's hours, wages, anything.

Another NUPE officer initially disagreed with this opinion.

Researcher: Some people have the attitude that if there was no trade union management would exploit the workers as much as they could.

Sam: No, I don't think that. I've never thought that.

For him, the primary function of a trade union appeared to be one of co-ordination. He was asked what would happen if there were no trade union:

Sam: Well you'd have each man fighting for his own good, and you'd have chaos in my opinion.

Researcher: You mean each member of staff?

Sam: Between each member of staff, because everybody would have a different opinion, and they'd all be saying, 'I should be getting this.' and, 'I should be getting that.', whereas with a trade union it's laid down, you get this and that, and that's it. Everybody gets the same.

This was taken to mean that trade unions are responsible for establishing uniform terms and conditions of service for staff but the officer

had a second concern, which appeared to be with the other extreme, the interests of individual members:

Researcher: Back in 1960 I imagine people only joined the union as a sort of insurance, didn't they, just in case anything went wrong?

Sam: Well, that's all anybody joins a union anytime for, really.

Researcher: Even today, do you think?

Sam: Even today. It's not for what they're going to get out of it - they know that if they join a union that if anything goes wrong, there's somebody there to talk for them.

Intermediaries

The ability to act as an advocate, together with being able to provide knowledge and practical advice, seemed to be similarly regarded by ASTMS members as one of the main functions of trade union representatives. One of the ASTMS representatives described how:

> "The bulk of the staff, in Pathology anyway, are fairly vague about their conditions of service for a start. They're fairly vague about their rights and about their duties. And that's something that never ceases to surprise me, that they are as vague as they are about what they're supposed to do. They always know a bit more about their own rights, but they don't know that much more about their duties, what they're getting paid for. But I think they feel, or they seem to feel, that as long as somebody does and they can be sure that someone is likely to side with them they're happy, because if anything happened they've got somebody they can go to that they trust who can give them the information they need, give them advice or guidance, and on top of that has the nerve to go along to talk to people like management on their behalf, where as they may not have either the nerve or the inclination or the skills to do it themselves.".

The provision of advice was identified by one of the NUPE shop stewards as one of the main functions of trade union representatives, but she intended that it should be directed equally as much to management as to the members. Throughout the research interview she conveyed

a somewhat naive or possibly deliberately diplomatic approach about the nature of staff/trade union/management relations, which included the implication that management is usually right but occasionally makes mistakes and trade unions exist to point these errors out and to provide the correct solutions. Another NUPE shop steward felt that trade unions had an important duty even when management was acting reasonably. During a discussion about a forthcoming disciplinary interview he remarked:

> "The right is on your side. The black and white is on your side, put it like that. Of course, you'll meet opposition. You can't expect us to come in here and - you've got to be seen doing justice.".

Protagonists

Other representatives stressed the function of trade unions as the means by which staff defend themselves in the inevitable or assumed conflict of interests between themselves and management. One NUPE shop steward was asked:

Researcher: Is it that there are some people who will always be bound to believe, or have this more traditional attitude, that management is always trying to get one over on the staff. Do you get people like that?

to which he replied:

Colin: Well, obviously you do get that feeling, but I don't think it is generally felt. I think it's generally a belief that it's us versus you in the respect that you're trying to get the best you can and we want the best we can. So there's always going to be that difference between us, you see.

A similar sentiment emerged when he clarified why the porters were so concerned about whether a duty was theirs or not:

> "As you know, we've had many a discussion over the duties of a porter and therefore they feel why should it be - like you, for instance - who decides each time what is our duty. It's not in the Whitley Council handbook what our duties are. So therefore it's got to be contested each time. We might win, we might lose.".

An ASTMS representative explained that trade unions become involved in contesting management decisions because staff are far more sensitive to threats to their jobs as a result of changes introduced by management than management realises:

> "I know there's a long distance between a real threat to job security and a perceived threat, and on top of that there's an even longer distance between a perceived threat to job insecurity and a minor, little detail of management decision which the employee instinctively feels takes him a stage closer to job insecurity.".

Lee (1982:50) confirms that the strength of opposition and sensitivity described by the last two representatives is found elsewhere in employing enterprises:

> "How is it that apparently normal and reasonable people can become so intransigent as to put their livelihood in danger, sooner than yield to what most people would regard as common sense measures? At the heart of each apparently unreasonable stand lies some kind of quite logical and justifiable fear. This fear fuels an anger which directs an antagonistic response, in much the same way as any sudden encounter with something strange will promote an aggressive reaction.
> On the shop floor, this anger is intensified by the member of each previous occasion when a similar situation has led to people feeling 'conned' or otherwise unhappy. As a result, quite minor and relatively insignificant fears may produce disproportionately vigorous opposition, which is reinforced by the memory of each previous time that resistance paid off. This is a cumulative process, which results in the old hands becoming steadily more stubborn, as even the most trivial of fears becomes magnified and triggers intense opposition. ....
> Any new proposal not only has to present strong grounds for accepting the change, but must also overcome this backlog of associated experience, which promotes a bias against it.".

This was a task which many shop stewards and staff representatives felt they contributed to, despite their essentially adversarial role. One NUPE shop steward put it bluntly:

"My main purpose is to avoid industrial action.".

The Society of Radiographers' representative explained the difficulty in liaising with staff about management initiatives:

Meryl: It takes an awful long time to appreciate that you can't just do it, that you're not pulling the wool over our eyes, and it's very difficult to get that over to them.

The interview continued with a reference to staff representatives but the representative interrupted:

Researcher: I also realise now that they spend quite a lot of time ....

Meryl: Defending you (laughing).

As a result, she stated, "We find ourselves piggy-in-the-middle.".

Nevertheless, there was also recognition that trade unions enable the use of coercion in employees' dealings with management. One of the ASTMS representatives explained one of the consequences of the 1974 reorganisation of the NHS:

> "And all of a sudden we discovered that we were sort of miles away from any source of authority to get something done for definite. We couldn't get problems solved, without getting really nasty about it. So it was really a protection mechanism, I suppose. Everbody began to expect the unions to start earning their money and they began to expect us to start putting up some sort of resistence, some sort of defence, and to provide some sort of channel through which they could try to prevent the management from doing things they didn't like.".

The necessity of attacking management was also expressed by a NUPE shop steward:

> "In the past management would make lots of promises about this - they still do not mind, and it's still not achieved. Well it's just not on, it remains as it is. And it will remain as it is until you get aggressive. The minute you start aggressive, management starts to pick up, 'Now what's up, what's the trouble?', and that's the only way you get it noticed. Now the form of aggressiveness can take a few shapes, you know that, and I'm more of an activist, I think, not a pacifist.".

Defence of the Service - National and Regional Issues

This shop steward then went on to declare, "And yet, see, you've got the hospital at heart, you've got your own members at heart." and this raises the complex issue of the nature of the responsibility that trade unions exercise in maintaining and improving the level of services provided. One of the unique characteristics of Health Service trade unions is that their members work in an enterprise with strong emotional appeal to the general public and they can often portray themselves as the guardians of the service, warding off attacks on it by those who run the service but who are also bound by political or financial constraints. Whether the claim to represent the interests of patients as well as staff is objectively justifiable is suspect for a number of reasons, but if it is a genuine belief of trade union members or their representatives this issue may be yet another factor influencing the potential for participation. For many managers an important objective of participation is at the very least to broaden the outlook of staff beyond a sole concern with the maintenance and betterment of their own interests and, hopefully, to build on this to achieve an identification with the interests of the enterprise as a whole. This implies that participation is one means by which staff can come to accept some of the constraints upon management and this was certainly an opinion expressed by an NHS regional administrator speaking at an IPM annual conference, reported in Personnel Management (December 1981):

> "This was echoed by Brian Edwards of Trent Regional Health Authority who wanted the concept of involvement extended to the local community, trade unions and other interest groups who are all affected by the decisions of NHS management. They could all be persuaded to agree to cost containment if a decision making framework allowed them to participate.".

The irony is that, in the NHS, staff and trade unions can be portrayed as best preserving the philosophy of the NHS and its services by refusing to accept the managerial constraints. It may be more difficult, therefore, to make participation attractive if engaging in it might not only compromise the protection of the interests of staff but also those of patients.

Health Service trade unions, especially NUPE, argue very publicly that they defend the Service at both national and local levels. Typical of many comments by trade unionists about the Conservative government's proposals to test NHS hotel services by competitive tendering is this one reported by Colin Clifford in Observer Business (11.9.83.):

> "A spokesman for NUPE described the circular as a 'major threat to the totality of the Health Service' and accused the government of being 'hell bent on an ideological policy of destroying the Health Service'.".

The same accusation has been made about the arrangements for accommodating private patients in NHS premises. In the South Wales Echo (13.1.82.), Neil Docherty reported that twelve private patients would be allowed within South Glamorgan Health Authority at any one time, which NUPE opposed:

> "As part of a protest package they are also planning a 'Conscientious Objectors' campaign for workers who do not want to service the pay beds. A 'conscience clause' is to be drawn up for workers to sign ' so that they can indicate their opposition to anything that is going to undermine the National Health Service, ' said Regional NUPE Organiser Mr Stuart Barber.".

The announcement that the Secretary of State for Wales was looking for managerial efficiency within the Health Service was greeted equally vigorously. In the South Wales Echo (24.11.82.) it was reported that:

> "'Unions tell public of NHS fears' Unions will try to spell out to the people of Cardiff this week what they see as a threat to the National Health Service.
> Cardiff Trade Union Council have called a public meeting for 7 o'clock on Friday night as part of their campaign against any

> run down in health provision.
> A spokesman for the council said: 'We believe the citizens of Cardiff are not generally aware of just how big is the threat to the National Health Service posed by the government's intention to "save" £52 m in Wales by 1989 and destroy a further 9,200 jobs in the process.'.".

In The Times (25.9.82.) it was reported that:

> "The Welsh Office report containing the proposals calls for 'a vigorous and determined attack on costs and control of manpower which must be imposed without delay.' The Welsh Office said, however, that the document was put out merely for consultation with Health Authorities.
> Mr Stuart Barber, the NUPE area officer for South Glamorgan said he had seen the report, and denied that it was a consultative document.
> 'This is a policy report and calls for the most appalling cuts, which, if repeated throughout Britain, will decimate the Health Service.'.".

The issue which generated the greatest trade union opposition locally for several years was the Health Authority's proposal to close an orthopaedic hospital. The South Wales Echo (17.6.82.) reported this decision and subsequent comments from staff representatives:

> "Royal College of Nursing Officer Mrs Anita Davies said: 'It's disgusting - they have ignored the public opinion which they are supposed to represent.'
> Sister Elsie Griffiths of the Hospital Action Committee vowed that the fight was not over.
> 'South Glamorgan Health Authority seem to think they can do what they want and ignore public opinion, but we are not finished yet.'
> A meeting of the Action Committee, which includes representatives of other unions will be meeting soon to map out the next stage in the campaign, she said.".

The newspaper also quoted an NUM officer:

> "Mr Haydn Matthews, Social Insurance officer for the National Union of Miners for South Wales said he was 'absolutely disgusted' at the Authority's stand.
> 'We are sick about this because, as has been stated time and time again, it's the only orthopaedic hospital in Wales.'
> 'As miners we are very embittered and there is no doubt that we will use what influence we have on the coal fields - both industrial and political - to try and stop the closure at Rhydlafar, even at this late hour.".

Another report in the South Wales Echo (24.4.84.) was about allegations by South Glamorgan NUPE branches of poor standards in local private nursing homes. The full-time officer explained why the union was getting involved in such issues:

> "'It is us who are now the public watchdog. Our members are the eyes and ears of the public interest. If we find shop practice we will jump on it from a great height.'.".

In many such campaigns the interests of the staff go largely unmentioned or at least are often implied to be of secondary importance to the prime objective of preserving the service. However, a leaflet issued by the South Wales district of NALGO in 1983 emphasised both and made the priority explicit. The leaflet linked two major issues and made the combination its title - "Privatisation and Private Medicine", subtitled "A threat to jobs and services". It described how, 'We need to be aware that any step towards privatisation jeopardises the future of the National Health Service and threatens jobs" and, "Privatisation and private medicine both form part of the government's campaign to dismantle the NHS.". It looked at the cost of managing the Health Service and concluded:

> "Looking at these figures should convince anyone that the National Health Service is still the most efficient and viable method of providing health care and must be protected at all costs.".

As a remedy:

> "it is vital for anyone, who is interested in the future of the National Health Service, to become active in their trade union and to apply pressure on those politicians who make decisions affecting the NHS.".

At the end, priority was given to altrusim:

> "The message to all NALGO members is clear, we must organise to defend our jobs, but more importantly we must defend the Health Service.
> The people of this country deserve to keep the service that they have enjoyed since it was introduced by those more enlightened politicians all those years ago.
> Let us show that NALGO members really do PUT PEOPLE FIRST.".

Defence of the Service - Local Sentiment

These statements may be expressions of genuine passion, but may also be rhetoric concealing a fight to support the members' interests and/or a ruse to take the opportunity to reverse the hero and villain roles usually allocated during disputes such as national pay award campaigns. In the research at least, it appeared that there are indeed trade union and staff representatives who have a sincere belief that because they do not have to consider the financial restrictions that managers do they are concerned to positively maintain and enhance the level and quality of services to an extent that exceeds the intentions of management. One NUPE shop steward described, for example, how for him, "no matter what happens, the patient has always got to come first, irrespective of anything else. Irrespective of trade union, or anything else." and another emphasised that management did not always appear to share this priority:

> "You know as well as I do, you're under directives to cut down staffing, cut down time, anywhere and everywhere that you can. Which you have done, which is your job. But it boils down to - who suffers most, who's the most important in a hospital? It's the patients, isn't it, whether it's on the waiting lists or in attendance - a person waiting for a bottle.".

That this was not the unanimous opinion of the staff representatives was well demonstrated by a NUPE housekeeping shop steward who even found it difficult to comprehend what the caring role could be for trade unionists:

Researcher: Some people say the staff care more about the service than the management. Do you think that's true?

Mary: They care more about what?

Researcher: The staff care more about the service than the management.

Mary: (long pause) The Service. What do you mean by 'service'?

Researcher: Well, I mean in your instance it would be the level of cleanliness.

Mary: (quietly) Than the management? (very long pause) Oh I don't know.

Researcher: Or do you see that it's any part of your job as a shop steward to make sure that the hospital is clean?

Mary: No, it's not my job. No.

The same shop steward later confirmed, "It's not our job to see how the hospital is run.". The meaning that this statement had for the shop steward was then tested during a discussion about a negotiating issue that the shop steward had been personally involved in. It had been proposed to reduce the level of staffing provided for the cleaning of the operating theatres and the extent and method of doing so had been negotiated with the NUPE shop stewards. The shop steward was therefore asked:

> "Assuming your members' interests are looked after, would you then have any concern about the level of cleanliness, or would you say, 'No, management ordered it, it's their problem if they get complaints'?",

to which she replied:

> "Yes, it's <u>still</u> their job.".

To the advocates of increased participation such candid self-interest is either only what is to be expected or indicates the absence of an important precursor, depending upon their own approach. The 'missionaries' would expect self-interest to be almost the sole goal of staff until increased involvement converts them to identification with the goals of management. The 'prospectors' on the other hand, believe that the desire to participate and contribute to management's goals exists but is not forthcoming because management fails to

provide the means for it to do so. The ambiguity presented by this co-existence of altruistic and self-interested trade union motivation is not merely academically interesting but is also significant in practice, because there are many who argue that trade unions are not, and should not be, concerned with wider issues in the NHS. Some of the tactics that have been used by NUPE, COHSE and the consultant medical staff to influence government policies on private patients, for example, are described by Macfarlane, who warns (1981:164) that:

> "The unpalatable truth that needs to be asserted is that coercive industrial action against the government in furtherance of directly political objectives is a danger to the democratic political system.".

More specifically, a Times leader (27.4.82.) referred to a serious reduction in the standard of patient care caused by industrial action in support of national pay claims and identified the irony that:

> "The NHS will be given another shove towards the status of a second class service by the very people who most vocally object to that possibility.".

In a letter to The Times (6.9.82.), the then General Secretary of the Labour party detailed the objectives of trade unions and he included that they press for good social services, but the TUC has made it clear that this is not where its priorities lie (1983:5):

> "Trade union representatives have a paramount responsibility to defend and advance the interests of their members.".

The history of the NHS includes many occasions when the interests of the staff have not been the same as the interests of the service but have been represented to be so:

> "Of course, campaigns around non-economic issues are not always entirely altruistic. For example, in the late 1970s, both COHSE and the Rcn fought virorously against a proposed re-organisation of mental handicap services which would have caused a shift towards local authority, community-based services, with a declining role envisaged for hospital-based nurses. COHSE and the Rcn alike were motivated mainly by concern about the career prospects of their nurse members." (Carpenter 1982:86).

It is tempting to conclude that trade unions are neither entirely selfish nor the true guardians of the service, and there would be some justification in this. There are times when they pursue their own interests and times when they pursue the interests of the service, times when the two coincide and times when the interests of one are sacrificed in the short term for the interests of the other in the long term, and vice versa. The very inconsistency and confusion of such a conclusion may itself commend it as accurately reflecting the reality of industrial relations but it should be recognised that in fact it can be misleading both factually and analytically. It provokes the glib summary that trade unions are both in principle pragmatic and pragmatically principled and although some trade unionists would agree with this, in private even if not in public, there are others who would find it offensive. Furthermore, it suggests that trade union activity is unpredictable and almost random.

Chamberlain (1977:89) quotes a trade union representative espousing the pragmatic approach but then relates this to the identification of themes in trade union activity:

> "'We have no plans. Unions work from particulars to general. We are empiricists without knowing it. It is simply a matter of meeting problems as they arise.'
> In these words a union official summarizes his views as to what leads a union to seek an expanding role in the management of a business. A handful of management people agree with his diagnosis. The union, they say, is moved by expediency. Its demands are governed by what it conceives to be its needs of the moment. There is no broader plan or purpose.
> There is an element of truth in this view, but it is inadequate as an explanation of motivation. It is important to understand the factors which lead a union to appraise a situation as requiring its corrective action.".

The attitude of the representatives at Llandough was very similar to that of Chamberlain's official. As has already been described, they

felt that they merely responded to specific incidents and had neither a strategy that motivated or controlled their behaviour nor explicit perceptions of how their behaviour related to the method of exercising the management function. But what arguments of expediency or pragmatism fail to offer an explanation for are the criteria trade unionists use to determine whether or not to 'adopt' an issue. Why do some issues appear as problems to some people and not to others? And why do some problems appear to be something simply to be lived with by some and to require the implementation of "corrective action" by others? If the causes of these differences of definition can be identified it may in turn be possible to begin to discover the nature of the implicit constructs that trade unionists have about workplace industrial relations activity.

The Issues Pursued

The research showed that in fact one of the few characteristics common to nearly all the shop stewards and representatives of staff organisations was that of acting as a filter, of exercising judgement about the issues to pursue. They nearly all described how if the individual members of staff felt strongly enough about a problem they would come to them, but then they would have to decide whether or not it was reasonable to attempt to resolve the problem. However, the research also revealed clear differences between the representatives about the types of issues they felt it was appropriate to get involved in. Their decision about whether or not to do so was partly based on the details of each issue they became aware of but was also partly related to their ideas about the purpose of a trade union and its representatives. Some were only concerned with trade union involve-

ment in national negotiations, others with ensuring that staff at least obtained the terms and conditions of service they were entitled to, but no more, and others with the nature of working practices.

Certainly the range of issues that representatives collectively become involved in is quite enormous. McCarthy (1966) has commented that shop stewards:

> "tend to believe that any subject which affects their members is a fit and proper matter for negotiation and agreement; they also are inclined to think that conflicts of interests can just as easily arise over questions such as the introduction of new machines or output levels as they can over wages and hours.".

Clarke (1980:10) points out that:

> "Other research conducted for the Donovan Commission showed that the range of subjects commonly negotiated by shop stewards included matters such as distribution, pace and quality of work; safety and health; machine manning and job transfer; levels and distribution of overtime; reprimands, suspensions and dismissals; engagement of labour; number of apprentices and redundancy.".

And Clarke also reports that a later survey suggested that the range of issues negotiated had in fact further increased. Another dimension of the types of issues pursued by trade unionists is identified by Armstrong et al (1981:16). They refer to subjects of workplace concern and state that it is:

> "These issues, rather than the nature of the wider society or the dominant characteristics of the 'system' of production and distribution, tend to be the day-to-day locus of struggle and accommodation between the differing values of workers and managers. The apparently smallest of issues is capable of generating 'matters of principle', in which questions of control of equity and of 'rights' are involved.".

As a means of gaining insight into how stewards and representatives defined what was 'reasonable' to pursue, comments obtained during the interviews were of little value. I explained to one NUPE shop steward:

> "What I am trying to do is to identify what are the things which really bother the staff and which they want to try and change and they do so through you.",

but in reply she could neither generalise nor give more than one example:

> "Well nothing really that I can say has been a big thing. It's just small things which when, say a supervisor will start picking on the girls, and after a certain time the girls can only take a certain amount.".

A NALGO representative was able to generalise slightly more:

Graham: I was interested in union work - from the point of view of getting justice done, of people getting what are their rights.

Researcher: What sort of rights do you mean and do you think they are denied if there isn't a trade union?

Graham: What I think happens is that regulations are passed that they're entitled to certain benefits, but quite often managers don't inform them; they don't know and they don't get them, or the manager says, 'You can't have this, you can't have that.', when in actual fact they can have it.

A third representative, from ASTMS, also emphasised the protective role of trade unions:

Eric: No union member has ever complained to me, in all these years, about an issue that doesn't threaten them. Never. I only get complaints when they feel threatened.

Researcher: What do they see as things that threaten them?

Eric: The threat of losing their job; the threat of significant financial loss; or the threat of imposition of working conditions which they perceive as being very, very unsuitable to themselves. And that's about it.

What appeared to be a better method of analysing the types of issues of concern to shop stewards was to list every issue that they either raised or responded to during the interviews and to place them

in the contexts used by the stewards and representatives themselves (where an issue or a context appears more than once it is because more than one representative discussed it):

Table One

A Survey of Issues Pursued

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
Withdrawal of Saturday morning on-call payment for MLSOs	NALGO	Managers do not care - example of arbitrary action by management.
	ASTMS	Trade union members demonstrating concern for the service rather than trade union allegiance.
Redundancies	NALGO	Managers do not care - example of arbitrary action by management.
	Society of Radiographers	Severely critical of the way it was managed.
	NALGO	Example of issue that brings members to trade union meetings.
	NALGO	Lack of consultation by management.
	NUPE	Local management acting under instructions from superiors.
Sacking of specific individual	NALGO	Differences in interpretation of procedures between management and trade unions.
Early retirement for women	NALGO	Example of negotiated agreement.
Timekeeping and length of breaks	NALGO	Unions could assist in enforcing if consulted.
Trade union office	NALGO	Example of difficulty in getting things from management.

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
	NUPE	Unkept, protracted promise by management.
Working areas too small	NALGO	Aware of problems in departments other than that in which the representative works.
Requesting time off	NUPE	Example of issues staff are reluctant to approach management about.
Unequal treatment of staff in same department	NUPE	One of the strongest causes of dissatisfaction among staff.
	NUPE	Example of staff grievance.
Victimisation of member of staff	NALGO	Example of issue that would be pursued more strongly by shop steward than staff organisation representative.
Adequate changing rooms and more lockers	NUPE	One of the highest priorities for change within department.
Induction	NUPE	Grievance because none exists.
	NUPE	Lack of adequate training.
Allocation of annual leave	NUPE	Staff dissatisfied with method of allocating holidays.
	NUPE	Example of problem that shop stewards have to explain to staff on behalf of management.
Disciplinary and grievance procedures too long	NUPE	Example of poor management in Health Authority.
Disciplinary procedure	NUPE	Over complicated in Health Authority.
Health Authority policies and procedures	ASTMS	Too complicated to be of value

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
Poor quality cleaning machines	NUPE	Example of issue that could be raised at management/multi-union consultative meeting.
	NUPE	Example of problem that makes it difficult for staff to meet the required service standard.
Extreme weather payment policy	NUPE	Example of staff grievance, because of the effect on pay and annual leave.
Ward round disrupts cleaning programme	NUPE	Example of practical problem changing agreed schedules.
Annual change of duty allocation	NUPE	Heads of Department should discuss with shop stewards before staff.
Delay in return of uniforms from laundry	Society of Radiographers	Example of a main cause of dissatisfaction.
Confusion about identity of Head of Department	Society of Radiographers	Example of problem about existing management structure.
On call payments	NUPE	Example of local management constrained by national agreements.
Staff not given copies of terms and conditions of service	NUPE	A cause of dissatisfaction.
Lack of job descriptions	NUPE	A cause of dissatisfaction.
Training of trainee ODAs	NUPE	ODAs not involved.
Short notice about moving furniture	NUPE	Example of occasion when staff complain about lack of information.
Bad relationships between staff	NUPE	Example of minor grievance that could have escalated.
Member of staff not pulling their weight	NUPE	Example of issue staff would raise at meeting with shop stewards.

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
Allocation of duties	NUPE	Example of problem causing staff dissatisfaction.
Free meals during bad weather	NUPE	Example of obeying management even when disagree.
Introduction of bonus schemes	NUPE	Trade union negotiated an agreement one group of staff did not want.
Job flexibility - Cooks covering Cafeteria staff	NUPE	Example of issue that might have caused industrial action.
Dissatisfaction with new member of staff	NUPE	New appointments will be challenged if necessary.
Effect of menu on workload	NUPE	Unsatisfactory arrangement staff altered themselves.
Breakage of crockery	NUPE	Unrecognised effect of installing new equipment.
Staffing implications of alterations to department	NUPE	Lack of information from management.
Timing of meal trolleys	NUPE	Problem resolved by shop steward rather than referred to management.
Cleanliness of swill area	NUPE	Inter-departmental problem.
Partition across entrance to department	ASTMS	Example of management indecision and desire to seek higher authority.
Two individuals on the same senior grade	ASTMS	Sole dissatisfaction with management structure.
Private patients	ASTMS	Disagree in principle but feel unable to take preventative action.
MLSOs on call have to collect specimens	ASTMS	MLSO grievance. Example of problem causing confusion about managerial responsibility in laboratories.

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
Rest room removed from staff	ASTMS	MLSO grievance.
Obstetric Unit	ASTMS	Lack of consultation in planning.
	NUPE	Trade unions should be involved planning process.
Wages	NUPE	Inaccurate payments inadequately resolved by heads of departments.
Definition of duties	NUPE	Head of department refers staff enquiries to shop stewards.
Long term sickness	NUPE	Failure to resolve by management.
Bonus schemes	NUPE	Inappropriate in health care.context.
Probationary periods	NUPE	Apparently not applied uniformly or enforced.
Wheelchairs	NUPE	Far too few available.
Taxis	NUPE	Cause of excessive expenditure.
Cleaning of operating theatres	NUPE	Trade union required in order to protect staff interests during reorganisation.
Staffing levels	NUPE	More staff required in all departments.
Recruitment	NUPE	Management select and interview badly.
Public toilets	NUPE	Very inadequate, no management action, reason for resigning from health and safety committee.
Inaccurate annual leave allowed for staff transferring from full-time to part-time	NALGO	Example of inaccurate management application of terms and condition of service.

ISSUE	ORGANISATION	CONTEXT
Boxing Day working by clerical staff	NALGO	Example of staff grievance when representative agreed with management.
Reorganisation of work load between laboratories or hospitals	NALGO	Example of issue requiring greater consultation.
Supervisors' attitudes to staff	NUPE	Grievance which could have cause industrial action.

Presented in this way, some general themes do begin to emerge about the issues that concern shop stewards and staff representatives, even if some of them are only of a fairly negative nature. On the more positive side, it is clear that the great majority of issues are about practical, operational problems. The issues relating to the longer term or to higher levels of management in the Health Authority are small in number and very specific and neither is there any indication that the issues pursued at a national level by the unions they represent form a framework for, or derive from, the concerns of these representatives at workplace level. Even on a local, tactical level, there was no indication of cohesion or direction among the problems discussed. Although the representatives were generally critical of management and individual representatives voiced specific criticisms, as a group they did not criticise management's performance in any major area of activity. Thus, for example, the representatives appeared to have no campaign to suggest that management was discriminating racially or sexually, or failing to meet its health and safety obligations, and neither did the specific examples indicate such difficulties existed.

As the last chapter identified, the representatives appeared to have no general areas of concern and the examples they gave of the issues that they think about show a tremendous variety, but this itself creates a consistency amongst the shop stewards' attitudes. Once again, it appears that the representatives were only demonstrating 'reasonable' concern about, or presenting a 'reasonable' response to, 'unreasonable', management action or omission. The interesting corollary of this is that from such a survey of representatives' concerns it becomes obvious that there is no intention to seriously challenge the existence or purpose of the management function. Some of the representatives even indicated that on occasions managers have failed to exercise their function adequately. Similarly, situations were described which clearly illustrated the acceptance of the use of 'as if' prerogatives, although there were also some examples of the kind of arrangements that the representatives would defend if they were threatened.

Another negative theme seemed to be that there was little in common between the representatives and the type of issue that they were concerned about, and this must have implications for the methods of enhancing the involvement of staff and their representatives. Furthermore, the arrangements need to be considered in the context of one more general issue that does perhaps begin to emerge from some of the representatives of the ancillary staff. At least one representative from each of the three main ancillary groups - the portering, catering and housekeeping staff - referred to problems that seemed to indicate some confusion about the nature of the relationships between supervisory staff, shop stewards and ordinary staff. Examples were given of supervisors referring staff problems to shop stewards, stewards resolving

supervisory problems without supervisors being aware of them, and shop stewards maintaining good relationships between supervisors and staff. Participative arrangements should at least take account of this apparent confusion of responsibility but then they either have to clarify it or to further enhance it.

Two other features of the analysis of issues which have even clearer consequences for participative arrangements are the lack of depth and understanding either available to or appreciated by the representatives about the problems they raised, and the numerous comments made about lack of consultation. Many of the problems raised by the representatives constituted just one facet of far more complex topics, some of which had even created dissention amongst the trade union members and staff themselves, but this was rarely apparent in the comments from the representatives. This would tend to lend some weight to one of the managerial arguments in favour of participation, which is that it encourages staff to develop a much wider understanding of managerial problems and goals. There was no criticism of the lack of formal consultative procedures, although there was some dissatisfaction expressed about other formal procedures, but one of the main causes of dissatisfaction about a variety of issues was that there had been a failure by management to consult properly, or even at all in some cases. The simple assumption could be made that revised participative arrangements might accommodate this desire for increased consultation but management may in fact be concerned about how increased consultation might affect the exercise of 'as if' prerogatives and there may be concern that increased consultation will lead to increased negotiation, which management might not want to unnecessarily bring upon itself.

One final point that must be made about the analysis of issues raised by shop stewards is that some caution must be exercised in the interpretation. The assessment of the issues is supported by and confirms the value of grounded theory and the list of issues appears to be capable of analysis, which must be attempted if information is to be obtained of value to workplace industrial relations in the same location in the future or in other locations, but the statements made by the representatives are not statements of 'truth', they are statements of 'perceptions'. This may sound academic, possibly even fatuous, or alternatively it could be countered by the argument that reality is only a collection of perceptions that do not even need to converge anyway, but a recognition needs to be made that the data presented is not 'objective' in a pseudo-scientific sense and is subject to and the result of the representatives' personal assessments. A sense of the accuracy of the assessments is enhanced by the more one is aware of the details of the situations the representatives describe.

Since this message is probably best conveyed by an example, it may be helpful to expand upon one of the contributary causes of the allegations of favouritism by supervisors among housekeeping staff. The housekeeping shop stewards, supervisors and evening staff would almost certainly all confirm that there is a rift between one of the shop stewards and her supervisor. The shop steward contends that the supervisor picks on her and her associates and treats them unfairly compared to the other staff, and her fellow shop stewards naturally support her. The supervisor contends that the shop steward is an unsatisfactory member of staff for a number of reasons and requires greater supervision as do some of the members of staff who associate with her, and in the past management has informally and formally

supported the supervisor in relation to both the shop steward and her associates. The division between the shop steward and supervisor was made even more severe when the supervisor was one of those mainly responsible for a large number of housekeeping staff transferring into COHSE from NUPE. (The Head Porter was similarly alleged by NUPE shop stewards to be victimising their members when he and a number of other porters transferred from NUPE to the Transport and General Workers Union.) This example is described, not to indicate that the housekeeping shop stewards are not telling the truth when they allege favouritism amongst the staff and there is no doubt that they genuinely believe it to exist, but to indicate that the cause of this perception is itself a complex and long-standing issue capable of a number of different interpretations.

The Application of Sanctions

There is of course another dimension to the problems detailed above which the analysis does not consider. Given this fairly long list of issues that caused concern to a relatively small number of shop stewards and staff representatives, what methods have they used to remedy them? This question was answered by a separate analysis of all the interviews which identified any means by which the representatives attempted to influence the way management exercise its function. A wide variety of methods was identified but as one would expect the great majority of these lay within, and contributed to the definition of, the mutually recognised and accepted means of accommodating conflicting or potentially conflicting opinions and interests. These have been subsumed into the categories of 'participative processes' and are examined in the next chapter. But the

industrial relations history of Llandough Hospital has included occasions when the usual methods of accommodation have failed.

In the context of a discussion about participation this has significance for two reasons. To begin with, one would expect that all managers and most staff would regard a breakdown in workplace activity caused by a conflict of interests as something to be avoided as much as possible, and most advocates of improved participative arrangements would consider better industrial relations to be one of their outcomes. Some commentators go even further and suggest that participation is not only an implement that can be used pragmatically to enhance industrial relations but also that its absence may be a cause of industrial action. Dimmock, for example, suggests that (1977:125):

> "In circumstances where management are reluctant to accord the workforce a degree of control over decision-making, the workers may only achieve participation through the threat or the application of sanctions.".

Secondly, and ultimately of much greater significance, the consequences of a failure to reach an accommodation of conflicting interests are themselves one of the determining factors in how the processes of accommodation operate.

The range of sanctions open to trade unionists is quite substantial and has been detailed by a number of commentators, such as Macfarlane (1981:60) and Batstone et al (1979:59), who list activities such as striking, banning overtime, working to rule, sabotage, occupations and 'go-slows'. A particularly impressive list features in Baker and Caldwell (1981:136,137), who reproduce a pamphlet written by a group of Bristol trade unionists describing the spectrum of tactics that can

be employed to oppose management proposals for redundancies. Even in Japan, the country so often cited as a paragon of industrial relations virtue, sanctions, or at least the threat of sanctions, can feature prominently. For example, it was reported in the Observer Business News (6.11.83.) that:

> "Nissan union members will refuse to work on the proposed British car plant if the Nissan management give its go-ahead to the project without obtaining union consent, Nissan's powerful union leader, Ichiro Shioji, warns.".

The article later explains that:

> "He does not think it possible - 'Whatever the size of the plant' - that the project can go ahead without union consent. Nissan would certainly need to send a large number of employees to Britain to start up the project and to supervise the first stages.' If the union does not agree to transfer members and the company tries to force through its policy, it would be a legel question that would go to court,' said Shioji.".

In Llandough, attitudes to industrial action were markedly at variance with each other and with the incidence of industrial action. The NUPE representatives had organised industrial action several times in support of national pay negotiations, and on one occasion in support of members in another hospital over a local issue, and the portering staff had twice gone on strike without notice about local problems. The ASTMS members in the pathology laboratories had taken industrial action in support of their national pay claim and although the NALGO members had never taken any formal industrial action a number had on occasions demonstrated a lack of co-operation. Yet two NUPE shop stewards in particular emphasised how reluctant they would be to ever go on strike. One of them did not believe that he had an extra power to influence management because of his potential ability to initiate industrial action and he stressed the strict procedure he would want to follow before recommending strike action to his members, but this shop steward was one of the small number of key workers who caused the

severist restriction on patient throughput in the hospital during a national pay dispute only a few months after he had spoken. The other steward stated:

> "My opinion of strikes is that there should never be a strike - only as a very last resort. There's simply got to be nothing else to be able to speak about before you go on strike.",

but this steward had been one of the porters who had supported the lightening industrial action over local disputes that had pre-empted any opportunity for significant consultation or negotiation. Furthermore, when it was pointed out that there had been three strikes in the hospital over local issues in two and a half years he described how his trade union would always test a new administrator.

Another NUPE shop steward blatantly displayed how unscrupulous he was prepared to be in the tactics he would employ to support a case. This was revealed after it had been put to him that in the past NUPE shop stewards had lied, abused informal and even social contacts with management, and misled his members. His justification was that management was equally unscrupulous, as some of his comments illustrate:

> "Well it required tactics; you've got to be hard.".
>
> "When you're in a boxing ring, sir, you use every means at your disposal.".
>
> "I know it's nothing to be proud of, but when you do a thing, it's like you with us, you'd employ everything that you knew to get your end, or what you think should happen.".
>
> "We understand each other. You've got to, that's why you are paid for it.".

Once again, caution needs to be advised about whether to accept these arguments at face value. Allegations about managerial tactics may simply be a totally spurious justification during the interview for

what the representative recognised to be pragmatic and unprincipled bahaviour. Alternatively, it could be that the comments indicate the existence of a management image sustained by the shop steward to his members without regard to whether it is justified or not.

However, if the shop steward's belief is genuine that management will use any tactics whatsoever to obtain its goals it again raises the dilemma that participation may possess the potential to either improve the situation or exacerbate it. If power-seeking and -denying is replaced by the sharing of power and responsibility and the development of trust, participation will eliminate such adversorial relationships if they really exist, but if the shop stewards are merely pursuing pragmatic industrial relations avarice, the introduction of new participative arrangements could simply create another arena for conflict. The observations of a staff organisation representative about the behaviour of some trade unionists provide no grounds for optimism:

> "You find that there are about two or three, I think, that tend to be very, very aggressive. Aggressive in the wrong vein very often. To me they're just - now one particular meeting I came to with you, I've never seen anything like it in my life. To me they were just trying to pick you up on your words. There was nothing behind it - no reasoning, no thought. It was just, 'We'll get you today.', you know what I mean.".

More specifically, the Society of Radiographers' representative referred to the ancillary staff trade unions' attitude to industrial action:

> "When it comes to industrial action, things like that, they think, 'We're out. That's it, we're going to cause havoc here. Let's get the administrators running up the corridor.'. Let's face it, this is it, isn't it. I mean, nobody could do our job.".

The inference seems to be that ancillary staff trade unions do not believe that the withdrawal of their members' labour seriously affects the ability of the hospital to maintain its services but causes more of what might be considered to be a major inconvenience. This was a novel understanding of the seriousness with which industrial action by ancillary staffs might be assessed but it was actually expressed, even more forcibly, by a NUPE shop steward. She blamed the occurrence of industrial action upon management because it was taken when no other means had effect (she thought that, "the management should sit down and really listen to their grievances more.") and because management allowed industrial action to occur and demonstrated that it was able to cope:

> "They think to themselves, 'Oh, let them go on strike, because they won't get any help from outside. People will only sort of black them, thinking, "They're hospital workers, they shouldn't go on strike."'. Then you get your little helpers in to help you out.".

This is a rejection of the orthodox analysis of industrial action, which assumes that, to the management at least, it usually denotes a failure, since the activity of the enterprise it is responsible for is either reduced or ceases completely, and for many trade unionists it is a failure because once it is invoked, there are no other sanctions left against management. Macfarlane, for example, refers to an approach to industrial relations analysis that he terms (1981:33) 'moral realism', which presents:

> "an analysis of industrial conflict in terms of power. Free collective bargaining is a process whereby unions and employers each seek to ascertain the other's bargaining strength and concession limit, with a view to determining its own negotiating tactics. A strike is the result of a miscalculation of the power position by those negotiating, with either the union or the employer underestimating the other's strength.".

Influences on Effectiveness

From the interviews with the trade union shop stewards and staff organisations' representatives, it was possible to identify some of the criteria that they assess before deciding whether or not to initiate industrial action. These included the numerical strength of their membership, the opinion of their membership, the implications of any relevant Whitley Council terms and conditions of service, contract of employment obligations, the national industrial relations' climate, their relationship with the managers involved in any potential dispute, the seniority of the managerial level from which a contested decision originated, and the nature of management's contingency plans for coping with any industrial action. Although most of these issues are very specific, they in fact act as the litmus paper by which the staff representatives assess whether or not industrial action will be forthcoming and if so with what success. Armstrong et al (1981:84) describes one of the difficulties shop stewards may experience:

> "It is only on issues and occasions when workers reject the claims of managerial ideology that the intellectual means become available either to challenge the management rule-making process or to attempt to initiate it on their own account. This still does not necessarily mean that workers' entry into the rulemaking process will be effective: power may be lacking even if the motivation is there.".

In other words, the shop stewards may assess the criteria they use before deciding upon industrial action and decide that although they believe it to be justified and their members believe it to be justified, other factors mean that there is a strong possibility that industrial action will have no effect and therefore they do not proceed with it.

But even if the means to be successful exist and the staff representatives wish to initiate industrial action, the motivation to do so may be missing among their members. An example of these circumstances

was identified by Partridge (1976:8,9):

> "Similarly, during the course of the diary exercise it was observed that one particular 'group' which had the highest potential power to disrupt the whole site, never actually activated its power base although its earnings were amongst the lowest on the site. This group of drivers was aware that it had the power but did not use it. .... This implies that group consciousness is a precondition for exercising power.".

Thus for trade union power to be realised, individuals, and the groups to which they belong, must themselves define circumstances in the workplace as those in which they possess power, it is 'reasonable' to use it, and a cause or causes exist to justify its use. Because of the difficulty of priming the pump of such consciousness and its partial dependence upon fuelling itself, it can be argued that for any power at all to exist it must be constantly exercised. Chamberlain (1967:103) comments:

> "A union is stamped as effective to the extent it can make good on its promises. It retains its vitality only to the extent it remains effective. The necessity of survival and growth lead to the marshaling of the strength of the membership around a campaign involving both immediate and long-range objectives. When one is achieved, another must take its place. To retain its power, the union must constantly strive to increase it. Power unused means a dropping away in the membership, stagnation, and possibly disintegration. Power when used builds upon itself. The external politics of their situation thus provide a compulsion to the union to extend the range and the depth of their authority within the corporation and the economy.".

The source of trade union power and the motivation of the representatives and their members to take industrial action were examined in the Llandough research. Reference has already been made to statements from the representatives affirming that the worst manifestations of dictatorial managerial power had not lasted into the 1970s and this might de facto be taken to suggest that managerial authority had been diminished and increased power transferred to trade unions. The indication of the research data, however, was that although some of the

shop stewards did consider themselves to be fairly powerful, particularly because of their ability to initiate industrial action, a much stronger impression was received that the Health Service trade unions were weak, largely because of the enormous reluctance of their members to jeopardise the service by taking industrial action. An example of the minority view of the power of shop stewards was expressed by one of those in NUPE, in the context of their ability to resolve wage queries.

Researcher: Why do you think if you ring up Lansdowne [Health Authority's wages department] they should pay any attention to you? In other words, what do you think the power of shop stewards rests on? It's been talked about a lot in the press.

Colin: I hope it's not just the fear that, 'Oh my God, I'd better sort this out or they'll be on strike at Llandough Hospital.'. I've got a funny feeling that might be a lot to it, you know, whereby a head of department rings up and they'll shoot him any old story, but if it's not the union - 'Oh gosh, let's re-check this.' - type of thing. I've got a feeling that's what a lot of it is, because what happens if we decide to have a dispute up here and it's obviously Lansdowne's fault? They're going to get a bit of a telling off whereby if its a head of department, it don't go any further. So I've got a funny feeling it's the fear, you can call it fear or the apprehension, of the union taking it further, as far as perhaps industrial action because it's not sorted out.

The belief that their members would not consent to take industrial action because of its effect on the service to patients was largely expressed by representatives not in NUPE, i.e. those not representing ancillary staff. To one of the NALGO representatives, the balance of

power was clear. "Unfortunately, whatever people like to say, the unions have little power and the Authority have most power.", but he then appeared to qualify his statement:

> "The only real power we've got in negotiations with our Authority, with the management, is industrial action. It's amazing, and it's surprising what things they can do. Because regulations are so general that quite often they can get round them.".

He was asked:

Researcher: Obviously, at the end of the day, it's going to take something pretty serious for you to say to your members - to recommend industrial action of any sort, let alone a strike.

Graham: Oh yes, yes.

Researcher: How important do you think though, is the potential to do that when you are actually negotiating with managers?

Graham: Oh, it's a gread aid, a great aid. It makes a lot of difference.

This NALGO representative would therefore appear to share the belief of the previously quoted NUPE shop steward about the power of trade unions and its correlation with the potential to initiate industrial action, but when a practical problem that the NALGO representative had been involved in was discussed a quite different picture emerged. The members on whose behalf the NALGO representative acted were in fact almost identical to those described by Partridge. They possessed the power to take industrial action but lacked the motivation to do so. The representative had described how H. had deliberately not consulted the trade unions about proposed redundancies. He summarised that, "It made it much easier for H. and he sort of forced it through. His acceptance of H.'s tactics was challenged and revealed the reality of his bargaining position:

Researcher: If the unions really felt strongly enough, or if they felt they were in a sufficiently strong position, they could have frustrated the whole redundancy process, couldn't they?

Graham: Ah yes, but this is where it always comes. We've got a lot of muscle, but we can't use it. Because we say, 'Right,', say all the clerical staff, NALGO, all the NALGO members said, 'Right, we want more pay.', or, 'We want so and so. Out, all of us.'. Hospital grinds to a halt. Your mother-in-law, my mother-in-law or somebody else, comes in, can't get the best treatment. Our people can't do it, so they haven't got the power. All they can do is make it awkward.

A similar sentiment was expressed by another staff organisation representative, who had been comparing her department to the same one in another hospital.

Researcher: You almost perhaps give the impression that you feel that you somehow have been disadvantaged because you haven't acted the same way as at X.

Meryl: Yes, we have been, we have been. But there again, it's up to our consciences isn't it.

The same absence of support also significantly curtailed the activity of one of the ASTMS representatives. He explained that he was often reluctant to make a stand about an issue because his members often refused to back him. He concluded, "And what happens? 'Well we've got a moral obligation Bob.'.".

It might therefore be tentatively suggested that a large body of staff at Llandough possess industrial power but do not possess the group consciousness referred to by Partridge to use it. More precisely,

and using my own formulation of the components of group consciousness, the staff appreciate that they have industrial power and that there are issues which it could be used to influence but they do not believe that it would be reasonable to do so, certainly for local issues and hardly ever even for national issues. The absence of this motivation significantly reduces the level of activity of several shop stewards and representatives while others believe that they have a high level of power because they are perceived to be in a position to initiate industrial action, even if these shop stewards themselves are dubious about whether support from their members would be forthcoming if necessary or even if it was whether it would in fact make any significant difference. Indeed, one of the surprising discoveries of the data relating to the exercise of trade union initiative was that some representatives believe that management does not regard industrial action as a grave organisational failure but at worst as a serious inconvenience.

Some envisaged that its impact on management was insignificant in negotiating terms, others saw industrial action largely as a means of expressing how seriously a grievance was felt, and for others knowledge of the unwillingness of their members to participate in industrial action only served to define their lack of power. Nevertheless, for some representatives, despite even their own awareness of the lack of substance in the implied threat, the perceptions of others that they possessed the potential to initiate industrial action did generate a source of power and one which was used. This was especially true of the NUPE shop stewards.

Conclusion

None of the Llandough stewards or representatives attempted to claim that the consultation and bargaining activities that they pursued were a form of participation, and it is difficult to imagine how such a claim could justifiably have been made. Virtually all of their activities could be classed into two groups, both of a very negative nature. They appeared to either achieve the resolution of grievances caused by the acts or omissions of management or to obtain advantages for their members by exploiting managerial proposals for change. These functions are obviously highly typical of staff representatives and were identified, for example, in the study by Batstone et al, which also suggested their impact upon the employing relationship (1977:261):

> "In brief, the power of the domestic organisation meant that management had little freedom in introducing any form of change in production which might have an adverse impact upon workers. Major changes in production methods involved possibly lengthy negotiations over effort and reward. The same was true of shorter term changes. If management required temporary variation or exceptional patterns of work, they were generally bound either by negotiations or by a network of rules which were the product of past negotiation.".

The researchers continue by describing such activities as effecting a "limitation upon managerial freedom", and this seems to be the crucial distinction to be made in assessing the impact of the current activities of the union representatives in promoting participation. It may be a little too sweeping to state that trade unions limit 'managerial freedom', since often management succeeds in obtaining its objectives but because of trade unions is compelled to exercise its function in doing so rather differently, but the important point is that trade unions only 'act upon' managerial activity. They are not part of it, it is not in any way responsible to them, and furthermore the

management activity they act upon is often only a relatively small part of the spectrum of the management function.

This is not to suggest that trade union activity does not benefit its members, or even management. As Daniel and McIntosh (1972:58) explain:

> "Conflicts of interest are inherent to hierarchical business organisations which have multiple interests to serve and have to adapt and change. It follows from this that union representation or employees' interests does not introduce conflict into organisations. Rather it reflects the conflict that already exists, institutionalises it, and provides a medium through which the interests of those at the bottom of the hierarchy can be represented and the conflicts of interests between them and the other parties can be resolved through negotiation which, as we have tried to demonstrate, involves not only compromise and horsetrading, but also the seeking of alternative solutions that serve the interests of all parties.".

Trade unions thus act as a medium for both expressing and resolving conflicts of interest between managers and staff but they can provide only an ambiguous vehicle for the exercise of more positive participation. Participative arrangements with a foundation in the usual workplace relationships may seem to affirm that the sole means of interaction between management and staff are those based on the roles of potential adversories and these and other factors may only enhance or widen the largely negative function of trade union representatives. Participative arrangements which fail to recognise conflicts of interest are, however, unrealistic and are either likely to fail or to even further increase the scope of trade union negotiation, which is the very development that management might have been trying to avoid by not explicitly recognising the conflict in the design of its arrangements.

Chapter Seven

MODIFYING THE MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

Lists of the forms or categories of participation abound. They also usually feature prominently in classifications or spectrums of leadership styles. The ILO has commented that (1981:21), "The diversity of methods is as great as the diversity of aims" and that, "the methods of ensuring this collective participation will depend upon political, economic, social and cultural conditions and also on the objectives envisaged by the legislator or the parties concerned.". But it then suggests that participation can consist of a managerial policy of information and consultation, collective bargaining, a works council or similar body, representation on a managerial body, or workers self-management. Another list is provided by Clarke (1980:7-15), who describes the present forms of participation as joint consultation, collective bargaining, productivity bargaining, disclosure of information, unilateral worker regulation, and nationalisation.

Some element of classification of the activities of participation is inevitable as a result of, and as an aid to, the analysis of industrial relations behaviour but categories such as those produced by the ILO and Clarke can also be misleading. They suggest there is agreement about the generic definition of participation, which has already been shown not to exist, that each form of participation has a conceptual distinctiveness, and that there are shared meanings attached to the different descriptions of participative arrangements. If one examines the categories of the ILO and Clarke, for example, it

is possible to dispute the place of nationalisation, productivity bargaining, disclosure of information and managerial policies of information and consultation as forms of participation, or to argue that there is in practice no distinction between consultation and collective bargaining, or to suggest that joint consultation might to some imply joint management, with the power of veto on both sides, while to others it implies little more than a forum for the management message. Reservations such as these about the effect of classifications of participative activity may at one extreme appear obvious or at the other extreme seem academic, but in fact they do have practical significance. At worst, without them the categories can become so simplified that they can almost appear to be participative modules, or perhaps a more modern analogy would be floppy disks, available on a shelf for managers or workers to select and slot into their organisation to achieve their required change.

Another feature of the categories is that they obviously fail to give an indication of what the parties to industrial relations activity may regard as desirable, feasible or permissible and so the range of options available in practice may be severely limited. A report by the BIM demonstrates how its members are prepared to consider some forms of participation but not others. After explaining the Institute's involvement in amending the EEC's Fifth Directive, the report continues (1982:107):

> "A small-scale survey among BIM member companies in 1981 had shown that practical developments in employee participation were taking place in the UK on a voluntary basis. Many companies which had little experience of participation were introducing it, and the benefits of voluntary effort had been appreciated and taken on board. There was considerable interest in employee councils and participation committees; companies were training both managers and employees; most companies opted to involve

> 'all employees', the strong disapproval of the single-channel involvement through unions was marked; many respondents to the survey expressed their willingness to make voluntary participation agreements with their employees. This survey confirmed British industry's strong preference for voluntary developments which take due account of companies' varied histories in employee relations and communications, and indicated the kind of developments taking place and the context in which a modified Fifth Directive could be acceptable.".

The Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) has similarly sought to encourage:

> "'The development of voluntary employee involvement which would also help to pre-empt the imposition of more restrictive legislation' on worker participation, such as the various draft directives currently under consideration by the European Commission." (Industrial Relations Review and Report No. 302 23 August 1983)

and in the EEF's employee involvement checklist the number of categories of employee involvement arrangements is reduced to just three - communication, consultation and joint problem-solving.

Other articles in the same publication about Vaux Breweries (No. 312 24 January 1984) and H P Bulmer (No. 322 19 June 1984) describe combinations of participative arrangements implemented by management. At Bulmers there is a "Very open style of management", an agreed statement of company objectives, an elected employee council, an employees' annual general meeting and a profit-sharing system. Vaux has multi-level consultation, again an "open style of management", a profit-sharing scheme, harmonised terms and conditions of service, and quality circles. It would appear that judged against managerial criteria at least, e.g. company image, profitability and industrial relations, such means of involving staff are successful. Unfortunately, what the reports do not describe are the employees' attitudes towards the various arrangements and how they were involved, if at all, in establishing them. This is not unusual and there is in

fact very little data to indicate the methods that staff use to influence or to associate themselves with the exercise of the management function, or how they wish to make them more effective.

Clarke refers to job restructuring, job enlargement and job enhancement but then suggests that they are inadequate as methods of involvement (1980:16):

> "Such ways of giving workers greater control over their work have neither impaired necessary managerial authority nor weakened the bargaining power of workers. As so far developed, however, they do not provide for participation outside the area of the work task.".

Yet Daniel and McIntosh (1972:58,59) assert that:

> "the greatest spontaneous demand for control comes from the desire for more discretion and autonomy on the job. It is for this reason we have emphasized how the starting point for greater involvement of the employee lies in the tasks he does, the way these are organised, and his relationship with his immediate boss.".

Thus, even between just these commentators a difference of opinion exists about not only where participation of significance should be located but also what the effect is that giving greater control over their tasks to the workers who do them has upon the nature of workplace relations. Such issues are obviously important in any discussion about participation but they also bear enormously upon the nature of industrial relations generally and in fact Hyman (1975:12) defines industrial relations as, "The study of *processes of control over work relations*". This chapter will seek to describe the attitudes of the representatives at Llandough Hospital to some of the methods used to achieve participation, with particular attention to the ways in which they already exercise influence or control over the performance of the management function.

Management Style and Ethos

Although neither management style nor management ethos was specifically singled out by the Llandough representatives as a form of participation, it was strikingly apparent from the conversations with nearly all of them that they had relatively clear ideas about how management should exercise its function fairly and in particular how it should encourage its staff to feel able to contribute to the running of the enterprise. To place high value on management style as a means of promoting participation is sometimes regarded as paternalistic but for the Llandough representatives it has had real, practical value. The term is used to describe the attitudes and behaviour of management towards staff and their representatives that are apparent during the day-to-day interactions necessary to maintain the functioning of the enterprise. It is assessed by criteria such as frequency of interaction, degree of informality, causes of interaction, display and accommodation of personalities, and flexibility.

A management ethos of participation is a much broader concept, used to describe a desire to ensure that a proper appreciation of the worth of staff and the necessity of involving them in the operation of the enterprise permeates every aspect of the way in which the enterprise is organised, or in other words, the implementation of a complete 'package' of participative structures and processes, just one of which will be management style. The report on the arrangements at Vaux Breweries indicates the existence of such an ethos and it concludes that:

> "taken as a package, its open style of management combined with extensive provision for consultation amount to a substantial investment in employee involvement.".

There has in fact been national acclaim for the similar management ethos of participation described at H P Bulmer.

However, as this chapter will show, although the Llandough representatives valued a flexible management style, there were many specific forms of participation which appeared to be of no interest to them and apart from the obvious ones such as workers' self-management, nationalisation and profit-sharing, these ironically also included productivity bargaining, works councils, representation on managerial bodies, quality circles, job restructuring and shared responsibility for the management function.

Supervisor Liaison

Another orthodox method of participation given very little attention by the representatives is probably one of the most logical and obvious, namely the medium for staff/management liaison provided by supervisors and first line managers. This should be the level at which the cascade of information from the management hierarchy is made available to staff directly, in a form they can understand and in a manner which is part of their everyday workplace activity. Similarly, it should be the level at which the concerns of employees are channelled into the management hierarchy. This approach as means of participation is advocated by, amongst others, the CBI (1983) but it believes that the potentially important role of the first line supervisor, both as a source of information and as a channel of communication, is commonly neglected. Jarratt (1982:36,37), writing as the chairman of Reed International, also wants to see the participative potential of first line managers enhanced and tries to

explain why it is not being properly realised at present:

> "I believe that when talking of employee involvement we should start by thinking in terms of the whole management team being the first and most vital area in which such a policy should operate. .... In fact, we had better start with managerial democracy, making sure that all our management down to and including, most importantly, first line supervision - those who have the daily interface with the rest of the workforce - know what it is we are trying to achieve and have the chance of responding to it.
> Perhaps one of the most serious mistakes has been made by senior British management has been to allow the authority of first line management to be eroded - partly by withdrawing important decision-making functions from them; partly by diffusing their responsibility through the proliferation of staff functions; and partly by allowing a growing and powerful shop steward movement to by-pass them.".

But an awareness of the failure to capitalize on supervisory liaison has existed for many years. For example, Rothe (1950:240) reported:

> "As a management consultant, I have noted that plant operating executives seem to like and respect the union stewards and officers better than they do their foremen. This supports the complaints of some foremen that they don't feel they are really a part of management.
> Why? There are probably a lot of reasons. But one is most important, in my judgement -
> Plant operating executives are more like union stewards and officers than they are like foremen - in intellectual level, in interests, and in personality traits.".

He tested members of all three groups for their abilities in word meaning, logical relations, arithmetic and logical analysis and the foremen consistently scored lower than the shop stewards. The results from the vocabulary tests even indicated that:

> "an executive is more likely to reach the stewards than the foreman when trying to get ideas across. The foreman may not understand, but the steward is almost sure to.".

The eclipse of the role of the supervisor has also occurred in the NHS and Fewtrell (1982:27) confirms, specifically in this context, that the, "cosy view of the supervisor as the ambassador of management has been undermined for a number of reasons.". He suggests that they

are that pay differentials have been eroded and sometimes even reversed, organisational communications systems often by-pass supervisors, shop stewards have increased enormously in influence and power and often work directly with more senior management, employees have enhanced the power of custom and practice, and formal procedures, such as those for grievances, discipline or disputes, have tended to more quickly involve relatively senior levels of management, and first line managers and supervisors are not provided with sufficient training.

Among the shop stewards in the research there was only very slight recognition of the function that supervisors and first line managers could play in providing liaison between staff and management and the limited recognition that there was did not indicate that it was successful. One NUPE shop steward was non-committal:

> "The supervisor, hopefully, is working for the grade of staff they're supervising, and also they've got to be loyal to a certain extent to management. Then it depends a lot on how much trust the workers can have in their supervisor.".

To another NUPE shop steward the role of the supervisor appeared to be an insignificant influence upon the nature of workplace industrial relations unless it is aligned with the interests of the staff. In response to the question, "Is it inevitable that there's going to be conflict between staff and management?", he replied, "I shouldn't think so. You see, to me a lot depends upon the person in between, and the person in between you and us is A.". In seeking an elaboration of this answer it seemed that this shop steward envisaged that the supervisor should have greater ability to accede to the wishes of the staff, as currently channelled through shop stewards, and to represent the wishes of the staff to higher management. The impression that this gave was conveyed to the shop steward:

Researcher: Are you saying in a way then that you expect the head of department, let's say A., to act a bit like a shop steward?

Sam: Well, I should think so, more so. That way you may not have half the trouble that you would have, because he's taking a bigger responsibility.

Referring to the same supervisor, another NUPE shop steward identified a failing of the supervisory system not included in Fewtrell's list:

> "They're frightened. Even A. will tell you. He gets the feeling he's an ogre because chaps won't go to him, they'll come to me; they'll go through me to him, that type of thing. They do, quite a few of them are frightened, to come.".

The same allegation was made about a supervisor in a different department. A NUPE steward explained why the staff would not approach him with a problem:

> "The usual attitude is, 'I won't get any joy there. They're not interested in listening.' and 'They don't care.'.",

and he stated:

> "A lot of them are afraid to argue with the supervisor because of what they call reprisals. They feel they get picked on - they get intimidated - because they've dared to argue the situation.".

In principle, then, the supervisory structure may provide a means for enhancing the involvement of staff but this potential is not realised at the moment, either at Llandough or, it seems, more generally and there are serious practical problems to overcome, such as ensuring that individuals of sufficiently high calibre are in post and adequately trained. There also seemed to be some risk in Llandough that developing the role of the supervisor could create conflicting expectations, but in its present form it was not an arrangement that

inspired confidence or enthusiasm.

Self-organisation

There was only one reference from the Llandough representatives to anything resembling self-organisation or autonomous work groups. A NUPE shop steward who also had some supervisory responsibility described how he allowed the small group of staff he was in charge of to sort out its own system for allocating the duties that needed to be undertaken, provided it was one that met with his approval. Although this appeared to be good supervisor practice, it could not really be regarded as an example of an autonomous work group in operation and there was no other discussion about these sorts of arrangement.

Suggestion Schemes

Similarly, although Goodrich comments that one of the real factors in the demand for control is (1975:44), "interest in making suggestions", and in referring to suggestion schemes one NUPE shop steward commented that, "These are one of the finest things going.", no other representative spoke about systems for identifying or rewarding staff suggestions.

Neither did the shop steward who valued suggestion schemes realise that the Health Authority had only recently implemented such a scheme and that there had been a negligible response.

Collaboration

An arrangement which was mentioned by only two representatives was that which is best described as collaboration, but in the sense of co-operative effort towards a common goal rather than the pejorative, wartime sense. A NALGO representative had expressed support for formal consultative systems, because he thought they could highlight problems:

Researcher: From the staff or from the management?

Graham: From the staff, and also from the management. For instance, what about timekeeping, coffee breaks, and so on? That's left to the head of department, isn't it?

Researcher: For admin. and clerical staff, yes.

Graham: Yes, I mean if you felt that coffee breaks were being too long, or times weren't being kept, you could perhaps get a lot done through the trade union, if you had good steward representatives.

Researcher: How do you see the trade unions being helpful?

Graham: Of course, it's perhaps a bit idealistic, but they could say, 'Look, you're taking too long for tea break.'. They should be more responsible, in that if they're taking too long for tea break - it annoys me if anybody takes a long time for tea break, because they're abusing the system, aren't they, and I suppose you - trade unions could be more responsible and say that, 'No, this is not good enough.'.".

The other representative had stated, "I know for a fact that I can get a group of staff to do things I want them to do probably quicker if it's unpleasant than management can.", to which the response

has been, "That's not surprising, but what is interesting is why.", and he then continued:

> "All right. What I am saying is, why isn't that used? Because if I can trust the management, really trust the management not to pull a fast one on me, then there's no reason why we should not be able to co-operate. Now if they're prepared to co-operate so as to avoid undue disturbance to the staff, or unnecessary disturbance to the staff, then there's no reason why the trade unions shouldn't assist the management to manage the thing and attain the objectives, as efficiently as possible, because it's in everybody's interests to do so. Where you've got a conflict of interest, an absolute conflict of interest, well fair enough, it doesn't matter which way you dodge, you've got a problem.".

He later added:

> "There is no reason why trade union representatives shouldn't act as oils on wheels. I'm not suggesting for one minute that the trade unions should decide which wheels ought to be turned.".

This attitude conveys deep veins of cynicism about the nature of the membership, with which many of the other shop stewards and representatives would probably disagree, but also argues strongly that managerial objectives can be more readily achieved if participative arrangements harness the existing trade union channels, a sentiment with which the other representatives would probably concur. His words also reiterate the trade unionists' philosophy identified in previous chapters that the shop stewards have no wish to take the offensive against management but will fight hard if they believe their members' interests are at risk.

Informal control

In complete contrast, there are means by which staff can exercise direct influence or control either without the knowledge of management or in known opposition to its explicit wishes. Hyman (1977:97)

identifies that:

> "Many of the most important restrictions on managerial autonomy derive not from the formal institutions of trade unionism but from the spontaneous organisation of workers on the shop floor. Such informal organisation has always set some limits to the powers of management.".

Macfarlane describes how informal control existed many years before trade unions were established (1981:58-9):

> "But the worker was also a human being, with a will of his own, and many rejected the market conception of the model worker as one who devoted himself to his master's interests. The worker as individual might seek to alter or evade the work situation, rather than simply adapt himself to it and be dominated by it.",

and the three forms that he suggests this took were cutting down on the amount of time spent working, exerting some control over the work process and expressions of resentment and dissatisfaction. "Alongside individual acts of self-assertion and defiance there also emerged modes of collective action which assumed two main forms.". One of these was the trade union movement and the other was:

> "Informal action devoted to gaining control over the work process, especially the pace of work. Newly employed workers were made aware that they were expected to abide by the norms established by their workmates, not those called for by the employer. The new worker found himself a member of a workshop community which had, to a lesser or greater extent, succeeded in evading or wearing down the full force of employer power over the labour commodity.".

Although he believes it to be an exaggeration, Hyman (1977:97) states that, "Arguably, these shop floor controls have a better claim than orthodox collective bargaining to be considered a form of 'industrial democracy'.".

These controls can be used deliberately to enhance the bargaining position of the workforce, for example by agreeing only to do certain types of work on overtime, but they may also consist of an accummulation of customs and practices which in their intention are as innocuous as the minor habits of any individual. Clarke comments (1980:13) that:

> "working groups also participate in management by the unilateral regulation of working practices. Such regulation may well be acceptable to management or even desired by it. It may be an efficient way of conducting the work of the enterprise. Sometimes management - particularly higher management - may not realise that it is going on. From a worker's point of view, the network of customs and rules so built up, often over many years, virtually forms part of his contract of employment.".

In Llandough, the exercise of informal controls was much more evident in observed behaviour than in the research interviews, but some of the shop stewards confirmed their existence. One NUPE shop steward explained that some staff would always take advantage of a 'soft' manager and obtain the maximum benefit for themselves and another NUPE shop steward described how her members had taken unilateral action over an issue they were dissatisfied about:

Carol: We've got one menu which is a very heavy menu. We can cope with it in the kitchen but you couldn't cope with it on the belt, and we've asked J. if she could review the menu. She said she would eventually, but never got round to it, but we've - I shouldn't tell you this, should I?

Researcher: I'm not going to tell J..

Carol: We worked the menu to suit us, and the staff on the belt.

Disobedience

This is an example of informal control being exercise by staff without the knowledge of management but there are also occasions when staff contradict or fail to comply with the instructions of management. Armstrong provides several illustrations, including (1981:62):

> "Thus, on MoFoL's slipper-fettling line, the works director would simply move the speed control up another couple of notches whenever there was an urgent order. In this particular instance the forelady would move it back again if his vigilance was not

> maintained - 'It's a cat and mouse game we play - I know what they can do and what they can't' was her explanation.".

In another case, staff refused to adhere to a reduced washing up time at the end of their shift:

> "The millroom men simply reasserted their customary pattern of behaviour against the direct order of the managing director. There was not the slightest doubt in their minds that the dirty working conditions provided ample justification and this immediate and shared sense of being in the right quickly expressed itself in spontaneous solidarity." (1981:86).

In just the same way, my own instructions were ignored when I arranged for the door in the Porters Lodge to be cut in half and stated that the top half had to be left open and that no porters should smoke in the room. In fact, these arrangements have now been achieved but only after some years of consultation and negotiation with the staff and their shop stewards. In another situation the staff demonstrated the degree of subtlety they could use to resist management's intentions. On the day before a four-day bank holiday weekend I had made arrangements with the Acting Head Porter to move beds and furniture back into an empty ward during the weekend, which was expected to be quiet. The Acting Head Porter confirmed that he would move the beds on the Sunday night and the other furniture before then if possible, and would also approach another portering shift to do the same. The nursing staff on the ward were informed of these arrangements so that they could begin to position and clean the ward items. On the day after the long weekend I arrived back to find that no beds, and very little furniture, had been moved. In the absence of the Acting Head Porter, I interviewed the Head Porter and Senior Porter who said that apparently five hours' work had been done during one day. Nevertheless, despite my clear instructions to the Acting Head Porter there was a suggestion from both of them that there was 'confusion' about the work required, they both

implied that the weekend was not as quiet as anticipated, and eventually they also confirmed that there had been a certain feeling among the men, supported by their trade union, that the work should only be done on overtime. That the lack of overtime was the main obstacle became blatent when the Senior Porter suggested that I should talk to one of the NUPE shop stewards if I was to prevent the problem from occurring again.

During the research interviews, a NUPE shop steward was asked what she would do if she disagreed with something management wanted to do, and she replied, "I might refuse to do it.". This would be regarded by management as disobedience and the extent to which this can be taken has been stated by the NUPE full-time officer for South Glamorgan (quoted in South Wales Echo 17.6.82.) when the Health Authority decided to close its orthopaedic hospital:

> "This calls for an open campaign of civil disobedience to get them, or the Welsh Office, to reverse their position.'.".

But although informal controls are a significant feature of work-place organisation and disobedience is one manifestation of them, O'Donnell places it in perspective (1952:577):

> "Of course, it is generally recognised that there are many instances of refusal to obey. .... But to generalize from this behaviour that the source of authority *therefore* rests with the subordinates, the ordered, the workers, the individual citizens, is assuredly a *non sequitur*. These instances merely tell us that sometimes (and, indeed, not very often) subordinates do refuse to obey. An acceptable theory of authority would have to include these phenomena within its framework but not to the exclusion of the much more important patterns of obedience.".

Informal Discussion

However, the maintenance of the patterns of obedience is itself partly reliant upon informal responses from staff and their representatives, but in the form of non-adversarial informal discussion with management initiated by the staff or their representatives about items causing them concern. A NALGO representative intimated that perhaps this did not occur:

> "I was talking to a porter - they're over-worked, because of sickness and so forth. They do a lot of overtime, don't they. Well now, I don't know, if you had meetings with unions they could air their grievance and say, 'Look, we don't mind doing overtime, but of course when it gets too much....' and, 'What about the sickness rates and so forth.'.".

Ironically, the portering representatives demonstrated no reticence in making precisely these points anyway.

This lack of inhibition was confirmed by a NUPE shop steward:

Researcher: You said you thought some things weren't right. What sort of things do you see as not being right?

Dilys: Well, I mean I can't - it's just little things that occur. Day-to-day things really, which I go and talk with S. [head of department] and it's ironed out. Little things which could, if they weren't brought out, and I wasn't there for the girls to sound off to, sort of come to something bigger, I think.".

The relationship between these informal contacts and regular, formal departmental consultative meetings was probed:

Researcher: Are there things which are coming up now which you're not discussing because there isn't a meeting?

Dilys: Usually if I feel it needs to be discussed I go in and see S. and we discuss it at two o'clock or ten o'clock, when she's there, and it's discussed then.

Even when discussing some specific problems she reaffirmed how she would respond:

> "Well then I go and see S.. She's always very nice and she'll always try and put it to rights.".

What is particularly interesting about informal discussion as a means of involvement is that, as the beginning of the chapter on the management function described, the propensity of staff and their representatives to approach their heads of departments varies considerably. It appears to be possible to classify the facility to initiate informal discussion with a superior as one of Herzberg's maintenance or hygiene factors. In those departments where there was no impediment to informal discussion it meant that numerous smaller issues were resolved amicably, although there were still other issues that required more formal or adversarial solutions, but in departments where it did exist a much larger number of issues remained unresolved and the very absence of an atmosphere which encouraged informal contact between staff and supervisors itself generated dissatisfaction and further conflict.

Information - giving

One of the tenets of modern good managerial practice is that not only should staff and their representatives feel free to initiate informal discussion but also that management should exercise initiative in providing the information that staff and their representatives seek. ACAS (1982) has published advice on how to do this and Clarke (1980:15) in referring to a survey of communication methods in Clark et al (1972) reports that:

> "As to communication, the responses suggest that greater efforts are made in the public than in the private sector to keep workers informed.".

However, when a NALGO representative in Llandough was asked, "Do you think you get given enough information about what's going on in the Health Authority and in Llandough, as a staff representative?", she replied, "Probably not, because really, literally, all our information comes from the press, more or less. .... They know it all before we do.".

Some shop stewards also felt that they did not receive sufficient information, but not because they required the information for practical purposes but because its supply denoted their position as representatives of the staff. One shop steward explained how her head of department used to meet with her and tell her about things that were going on but no longer did so:

Researcher: What difference does that actually make to you?

Mary: Well I thought it was sort of her thinking that, in my position, that I should be told.

Even Dilys, the shop steward who had previously emphasised how easy it was to resolve problems informally with her head of department, felt deprived of information for the same reason. It was she who had remarked, "it would be nice to be able to know what is happening before you're told it in a meeting.", and when she was pressed to explain why, it eventually became apparent that it was because of its effect of reinforcing her position as a shop steward:

> "I think it would be nice to see why she's put so-and-so from one ward to another like that and just to know the reasons why she's moved them all.".
>
> "I'd just like to know why they're moved like that.".
>
> "No, I'm not disagreeing or agreeing at all. The girls are quite happy. But it would just be nice to know why, not for the girls' sake, for my own sake then, as a shop steward.".

The point being made by these stewards is that in effect there should be a two-tier system of information-giving, one for all staff and one at an earlier stage, in greater detail and on a personal basis, for staff representatives. The desire for this differentiation arises from the ability of a policy of information-giving to create either a convergence or divergence of two different means of enhancing involvement. Supplying information directly to staff can develop or strengthen a sense of cohesion within an enterprise, possibly by projecting an open and receptive style of management, and perhaps by increasing the data base of the participative potential. But through their systems of representatives, staff organisations and trade unions also constitute an important, and possibly antagonistic, means of providing participation, relying substantially upon information from management to do so.

Trade union representation

The ACAS guidance on workplace communications warns that (1982:3), "It is especially important that nothing is done to undermine the position of union representatives" and the function of trade unions as a means of participation is well recognised. In the report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy it was noted that (1977:23):

> "The trade unions have harnessed the desire of employees both to be protected and to have a voice in decision-making and have strengthened the position of employees in many large companies by expressing their hopes and fears collectively. The extension of trade union influence on the economy and on industry has been one of the more marked changes in the last decade, and it is through the trade unions that a large measure of employee participation has already been achieved.".

Writing just after the First World War, Goodrich indicates that such advances have in fact been taking place over many decades (1975:10,11):

> "The shop stewards' movement was a genuine movement towards the control of industry. .... The full story has nowhere been put together, and the evidence must be pieced out from the accounts of the shop stewards themselves and from employers' tales of 'what they had to put up with during the war,' .... *The shop stewards' movement was both an expression of the demand for control and an incitement to further demands*".

The ILO has confirmed that (1981:169):

> "When there is no special participation machinery .... the workers may still be in a position to exert a marked influence on decision-making in the undertaking either directly or through their trade unions. Many of the early social reformers and workers' leaders, particularly in the United Kingdom and United States, thought that to achieve 'industrial democracy' it was essential to organise this influence through official recognition of the trade unions active in undertakings. Direct relations between unions and management remain an important form of participation.".

However, exactly how trade union representation should enhance participation is unclear and Cuthbert and Whitaker concur that (1977:32):

> "Even a cursory examination of the overall union approach to participation reveals a disturbing lack of consensus, a situation with obvious significance for public policy developments. With regard to joint consultation as a mode of participation, the TUC has seen little future for it. .... The TUC stance is that increased participation must come from the extension of existing collective bargaining and joint regulation and, secondly, from the introduction of parity representation of the trade unionised workforce at board level.".

But, "there is ample reason to doubt whether the TUC approach reflects the opinion of individual unions." and they conclude that:

> "From the union standpoint, in general, what is important is that the Labour Party agrees with their view that unions are and must remain the single most important channel of representation in the workplace.".

Another, very practical reason for supporting this contention is supplied by Daniel and McIntosh (1972:111):

> "it is desirable that this involvement be manifested through a single channel to avoid a situation where management is faced with, on the one hand, a powerful body that can only obstruct and oppose and, on the other, a weak and ineffectual body

incapable of fulfilling any creative, constructive purpose.".

This may seem to be a sensible prediction for managers but the converse may apply instead:

> "Management may also fear that adoption of a single channel will result in the 'antagonistic' positions consistent with collective bargaining being carried into areas of discussion where management and workers have common goals." (Clarke 1980:12).

Recognising the ambiguity of achieving participation through trade union representation, Purcell (1979:29) identifies eight "core elements" of a strategy for collaborating with, rather than opposing, trade unions, while maximising the achievement of the general business objectives. The elements are:

> "1. The encouragement of union membership and support for the closed shop where appropriate;
> 2. The encouragement of membership participation in trade unions;
> 3. The encouragement of inter-union co-operation and the development of joint shop stewards committees;
> 4. The institutionalisation of irreducable conflicts;
> 5. The minimisation of areas of avoidable conflict;
> 6. The maximisation of areas of common interest;
> 7. The reduction of the power of strategic groups;
> 8. The development of effective control systems."

He particularly stresses the value to management of joint shop stewards committees as an agent of control.

But even if management attempts to improve its participative arrangements through the existing trade union representative structure it may very well only serve to confuse and antagonise the representatives because, as Hebden and Shaw (1977:195-208) summarise, it may change their purpose and some of their functions and introduce elements of complexity and contradiction that they have not previously had to cope with. This in turn may unsettle the representatives' members:

> "The new role of the steward demands that he must re-educate his employees in their attitudes to the company. Often this move is so incongruous when seen through the eyes of members of formerly

> militant workgroups that the credibility of their stewards is at stake. From bearing the stress of an adversary situation he now has to take the strain of bringing workers closer to management. In his traditional role he is a grievance processor; he takes explicit issues from the daily experiences by which they seek to obtain redress of grievance. He now has to adopt a much more managerial stance in interpreting company policy for his members. The conflicts between the roles is most pronounced in companies where relationships between labour and management were formerly most strained." (Loveridge 1976:16).

Representatives may wish to constructively contribute to the management function and be able to resolve or at least contain some of the concomitant problems but there still may be limitations in the extent to which they are prepared to exercise initiative in performing the management function. Their involvement may lie in a continuum from frequently proactive to entirely reactive and Hawkins (1979:161,162) notes that:

> "Empirical observation, however, suggests that the role which shop stewards and trade union officials still find more congenial is that of *reacting* to initiatives on the part of management.".

Another feature of systems of trade union representation that may inhibit their potential to provide a means of participation in management is that their own, internal participative arrangements may be very limited. Marchington (1979:138,139) discusses the role of the, "steward as the lynchpin" and mentions the significance that has been given to the function of shop stewards in providing a primary method of communication between management and staff. But he declares that, "For the purpose of this chapter, however, we are assuming a general level of consensus between steward and members in their dealings with management.", and he is right to make this assumption explicit. Commonly, it is made only implicitly, especially by those who contend that genuine participation can only be achieved through an effective system of trade union representation, but in practice such a consensus may not exist and even if it does it permits trade union representation

to create a form of participation only if it is a consensus with internal vitality. This requires that the members are kept adequately informed by their representatives, that the representatives are sensitive to the attitudes and opinions of the members and that the representatives provide encouragement for the members to become involved. The existence of these conditions cannot be taken for granted and indeed Hyman (1975:151) divides the nature of control arising from trade unions into three types:

> "Trade unionism is the institutionalised form through which workers can exercise control over employment conditions and the work situation; or the means by which control is wielded, not *by* but *for* and *on behalf of* them; or, because of this differentiation, a source of control *over* them in the interests of officials or external parties.".

Concern about the degree to which trade unions involve their members in their running and are sensitive to their members wishes has been demonstrated on a much wider basis by the present Conservative government and in January 1983 it introduced a consultative green paper on union democracy that began:

> "Much public concern has been voiced about the need for trade unions to become more democratic and responsive to the wishes of their members. In the case of many unions the role and influence of the rank and file seems to be minimal and all too often it is evident that the policies which are being pursued do not reflect the views and interests of the members." (Times 12.1.83.).

Shortly before the green paper was published the South Wales Echo (23.9.82.) reported on an independent survey of the attitudes of the general public and trade unionists to political and trade union issues. The respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement, "Many trade union leaders tend to be out of touch with their members." and the following results were obtained:

Response	All Adults	Trade Union Members
	(934)	(251)
Agree	72%	82%
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	8%
Disagree	6%	7%
Don't know	15%	3%

The conclusion was that, "The majority of adults and trade union members agree that many trade union members tend to be out of touch with their members.". Nevertheless, an element of distance is inevitably created in any organisational system which relies upon one individual acting on behalf of many others, and similar criticisms could be voiced of the British parliamentary democratic system. As Loveridge (1976:16) reminds us:

> "The sheer number of employees involved will usually require a representative form of democracy in which general assemblies do no more than punctuate and reinforce a wider sense of involvement on the part of the individual employee.".

Almost inevitably, the attitudes of the shop stewards at Llandough demonstrated their belief that the system of staff representatives provided one of the best forms of participation. Some made the point described by Loveridge that no other method is practicable. The Society of Radiographers' representative, for example, was worried that:

> "If everybody's saying to R. 'Well we think this, we think that.' and she tells them everything that's going on - well it's a real jumble really, isn't it. It's a real jumble.".

She was sure that her head of department:

> "would prefer in many instances, if it's a generalised, a big sort of issue, for one person to come to her and explain it, for her to sort it out in her mind and get the answers and all the

rest, and then come back on it, rather than have twenty people all battering at her, because you tend to find that people get very irate, personalities come into it, and you end up just having a slanging match.".

Some of the representatives found it hard to even conceptualise how any other form of liaison between staff and management could exist or gave the impression that their members would not feel comfortable with any other method. One NUPE shop steward regarded the trade union representatives as acting as a "go-between" between the staff and management and another shared the same opinion about the relative significance of shop stewards and supervisors:

Researcher: Why do you think it's more important that a shop steward should know that information, rather than the senior porter?

Colin: Because it's not the senior porter they go to, it's the shop steward. So therefore it's the shop steward who would give out this information. I mean, I'm on round the front as a senior porter, they'll moan to me that they haven't got a chair to take a patient to a ward, and then I've got to try somehow and trace those chairs, and find out, 'Well, look, did you bring that chair from here, did you?', and so forth, but to get something done about it it's the shop steward they would actually to to to go to management.

The necessity of having shop stewards to act as intermediaries for the staff was similarly emphasised by a NUPE shop steward in another department:

Researcher: Do you often find you just have to explain things to your members?

Dilys: Very often. You can explain quite a lot. That's what I feel, that they can come to you and sound off and sometimes sort it

out and it's just nothing really. It's just a storm in a teacup, which could grow if there wasn't somebody sort of to come and talk to.

Researcher: Why do you think they don't go to the supervisors?

Dilys: Maybe because I sit and have coffee with them at lunchtime and they come out - it's just, I suppose, I'm there and they come and tell me at break, and things like that.

But for a NUPE officer the existence of a system of trade union representatives went beyond meeting the wishes of the members and in fact he considered that it imposed an obligation upon ordinary staff not to relate directly to their supervisors or managers but only to the representatives.

Researcher: You said it might be going too far if a non-shop steward or non-union representative starts talking to a manager and says what he should do, but is that being fair to the other members of staff? Shouldn't they have their chance to say what they ....

Sam: Oh, yes, but to me they should turn around and say it to their representative, through their union. This is the way they should say it.

This statement seems to affirm that participation by staff in the running of the organisation should be exclusively channelled through the trade union structure and although it may be a reflection of the existing consultative mechanisms used by management it is interesting to note that another NUPE representative gave the impression that participation was only achieved by shop stewards:

Researcher: I do know that there can be great difficulty in getting people to stand [as shop stewards]. Even if people wanted you to, why did you think that you'd like to?

Dilys: I think because I like the involvement and I like to be able to - as I say, there are some things which I don't think are right and I'd like to be able to try and help the girls, including myself, because if I get a better deal for the girls I'm getting one for myself, and I just feel that somebody's got to speak for them and I feel that if they want me to I enjoy doing it.

This shop steward appeared to genuinely wish that the participation provided through the trade union structure should be of a constructive type largely exercised in harmony with management, and together with another shop steward she has worried that trade unions might become too powerful:

> "My own opinion of the union is that it shouldn't be as 'anti' as what they are now. It should be a working relationship between management and unions.".

Furthermore, she pointed out that co-operative arrangements already existed for the relatively amicable resolution of grievances processed by the staff representatives:

> "You know that we can come and talk to you or we can go for a meeting and talk and something can be ironed out, but if it wasn't ironed out it could case a lot of dissatisfaction and not be so helpful to the hospital or to the staff. Both ways it works for, don't you think?".

Understandably, there was little criticism of the internal democracy of trade unions and staff organisations, although one of the NALGO representatives was a serious dissenter. When she declared, "I mean what we know is what they want us to know.", she was not referring to management, but to her branch executive and she spoke several times of the lack of feedback and lack of information coming from the union branch. One of the NUPE shop stewards also complained that she did not receive enough information from the branch chairman

and was not even given notice of some of the union's meetings. In contrast, the Society of Radiographers' representative stressed how sensitive she had to be to the wishes of her members:

> "We can only do what the members will do. The thing is, they can say to me - give me a really horrible task which I didn't believe in at all and I'd still have to come to you and do it, as much as I thought it was wrong. If they instructed me to do it, I'd have to do it.".

Equally, one of the NUPE representatives had no doubt that trade unions were internally democratic and provided an effective means of staff participation.

Researcher: If we talk then about the staff having a say in the way things are run, does that mean you think that's the best way of letting them have a say?

Sam: Well a union meeting is always the best, because you're discussed in public amongst - you're having a public debate in the union, in a union meeting, and everybody's view has got to be taken. It's as simple as that.

However he subsequently talked very frankly about the poor attendance at trade union meetings and the lack of balanced representation.

Consultation

A category of participation that is rather more general than trade union representation is that of consultation. One of the ASTMS representatives articulated what consultation meant to him and also touched upon its satisfactory outcomes and its dangers:

Eric: If somebody says they're going to consult with me about something, I take that to mean that there will be no decisions made about whatever's under discussion until we've had a really thorough debate about it and exchanged views about it and tried

> if possible to come to some sort of mutual conclusion about it. I know that sounds like negotiation, but I don't see it that way. I just think that's what consultation ought to be about. Now if, failing at that point any sort of ability to reach agreement, then granted the management, because it is consultation, are quite entitled to go away, think about what went on, and then draft or devise or write whatever it was they were consulting us about, in whatever way they see fit.

This has connotations that consultation is a management-initiated activity, that undertaken properly there should be genuine potential for the comments received to affect the subject under discussion, that agreement is not a necessary outcome of consultation and that consultation reaffirms managerial prerogatives. The representative's summary therefore suggests that the characteristics of consultation are clearly identifiable, logical and mutually consistent but unfortunately it is innocently deceptive and also excludes reference to three other key features of consultation, namely its purpose, with whom it should take place, and the factors responsible for its success or failure.

Some of the advantages of consultation were described in one of the Donovan Commission's research papers (McCarthy 1966):

> "The uses commonly attributed to joint consultation are that it provides a means of harnessing workers' knowledge and goodwill towards achieving the goals of the enterprise; that it increases workers' feelings of personal identification with the enterprise and improved industrial relations; that it provides a channel through which feelings of dissatisfaction may be ventilated; and that it enables workers to participate in areas of the life of the enterprise beyond the usual area of negotiating machinery.".

Cuthbert and Whitaker (1977:32) judge that, "The overall managerial objectives of joint consultation have never been closely defined", and then provide a list that is almost identical to McCarthy's. In

an advice paper to its members about how to compile employee involvement statements, (in accordance with 1982 Employment Act, Section 1), the EEF summarises the forms of consultation as regular meetings with employee representatives, works committees/councils, health and safety committees/ liaison with health and safety representatives, employee representative consultative councils, suggestion schemes (and committees to operate the schemes), and training committees (reported in Industrial Relations Report and Review No. 302 23.8.83.).

If a modus operandi similar to that described by the ASTMS representative is accepted by the staff it might seem possible for consultation to fulfil a number of needs in the employing relationship and in forms that can be diverse although complimentary. But Cuthbert and Whitaker report that (1977:32):

> "With certain few exceptions, it has failed to live up to the hopes it once inspired. Judged on its own terms as a device for obtaining employee involvement and increased efficiency its performance has been hardly successful.".

In one factory, O'Neill was even able to offer evidence that consultation was responsible for a direct reduction in output. He discovered that output was higher at night than on day shifts, higher again at weekends, and even higher at bank holiday weekends (1982:41):

> "Managers did 'drop in' at all hours, but they were normally present only during the morning and afternoons. When on site, though, they held many meetings. This company has a 'high participation' ethos, and therefore holds more meetings than do any others. Furthermore, most meetings involve the attendance of line supervisors (and, not infrequently, off shift operatives). Were the operatives, left unsupervised, simply slacking during the meetings? This suggestion was ruled out on two counts. First, it was just not compatible with the general climate in the plant, nor with the output bonus schemes that operated. The second disproof, though, took some finding.
> An analysis of delays showed that many standard delays took slightly longer to resolve on day shift than at weekends. The answer was now clear: during the day shift the line supervisors and shift managers, frequently called away into meetings, were not around to deal with an emergency, or when quick production

decisions were required. Their attendance at meetings was building delay into decision-making.".

Clarke (1980) confirms the declining popularity of joint consultative committees and acknowledges that McCarthy predicted the demise of consultation with the development of workplace industrial relations negotiating structures. McCarthy's evidence (1966) showed that the usual form of plant consultative committees:

> "cannot survive the development of effective shop floor organisation. Either they must change their character and become essentially negotiating committees carrying out functions which are indistinguishable from the formal processes of shop floor bargaining, or they are boycotted by shop stewards and, as the influence of the latter grows, falls into disuse.".

The stewards, he argues, would not recognise that there are issues either of common interest or subject to managerial prerogative which could be discussed separately from collective bargaining issues:

> "Any committee on which they serve which cannot reach decisions, albeit informal ones, they regard as essentially an inferior or inadequate substitute for proper negotiating machinery.".

It was inaccurate of McCarthy to assume, however, that the development of shop floor organisations would preclude any form of liaison between the staff and management of a more direct nature and consequently consultative schemes have functioned satisfactorily in some enterprises, such as ICI and Cadbury-Schweppes:

> "In attempting to identify the crucial elements within any successful system of joint consultation one must firstly recognize the difficulties involved in generalizing from the particular. However, one prime reason for success appears to be the provision for effective involvement at grass roots level. At ICI, for example, this is achieved at shop floor level by meetings of weekly staff and management, based on workgroups, known as 'gen' sessions. Thus, if one has to hypothesize, it would be that whatever types of consultative devices are formulated, whether formal or informal, their major chance of long-term success rests on their ability to create genuine and effective involvement at a wider level than that involved in representative arrangements. This seems to us to be a key issue in any consultative system." (Cuthbert and Whitaker 1977:34).

In Llandough, one of the NALGO representatives agreed that the best form of consultation would be a meeting between all staff and their immediate supervisor or manager, although he had reservations about the amount of flexibility that would be available. He was asked what kind of new meeting might help to achieve better consultation:

> "I think if it was well run, a meeting or some channel for people, say administrative or clerical staff, to air their grievances. You see, some don't want to. They don't like to go to their head of department, I don't know why (laughs) - so they could air their grievances. But of course it's very difficult for the manager to do anything because he's supposed to be supporting their head of department, if it's against him. I think you should improve the channel from the mass of the workers to the management.".

No other representative advocated that improved consultation should be achieved by strengthening the direct relationship between staff and management. Other representatives considered that consultation needed improving but felt that this should be achieved by management co-operating more with the shop stewards and staff representatives, some because they regarded it as more effective than direct liaison and others because they held it to be a reasonable expectation of their office. For one NUPE shop steward, participation was solely about increased consultation and he proposed how it might operate:

> "I think more union participation in discussions might help, because I think through a union it would get back to the members.".

Research data examined earlier in this chapter has already shown that consultation may in fact positively assist industrial relations if for no other reason that it is seen as a management mechanism that reinforces the status of shop stewards.

However, the EEF's guidance about consultation explicitly advises that employers should not limit consultation to shop stewards and it is true that many companies now emphasise the necessity of consulting directly with the workforce:

> "'Communications have improved a lot. Before we told the shop stewards and they told the men what they wanted them to hear. Now we are introducing a piece rate system to control wage drift. And at the invitation of the shop stewards, we are meeting them and the men in groups of forty to explain it. We've got a lot of confidence in our future now.'" (Sunday Times Business News 31.1.82.).

Engaging in discussion in this way, by meeting staff directly in conjunction with shop stewards, is one alternative to consulting exclusively through trade union channels. The Institute of Directors has suggested another that eliminates trade union involvement almost completely. In its advice (1983) about employee involvement it stresses that employee representatives for consultative systems should be obtained by an election solely for that purpose amongst the employees and that the ballot should be available to every employee and not just those who are members of a trade union. A more pragmatic approach, at British Leyland, is described by Taylor (1982a:133,136). He quotes Robinson's successor as Senior Convenor at Longbridge:

> "'All kinds of changes have been accepted here that weakened the stewards and strengthened the management, but there never seems to be any let-up. You simply can't keep on treating men like this year after year.'.
> Implicitly, BL itself seem to agree. Strenuous efforts were made by the company to establish a new procedure agreement that would give the stewards and union officials an important role in decision-making without any return to the veto powers of the past. This was signed in May, though it may take some time for the new approach to start healing the wounds of the last four years.".

The implication of the convenor's statement is that "the men" and the stewards are synonymous and that by ignoring the wishes of the stewards the management has been treating the workforce with contempt.

The concept of being able to both retain effective managerial prerogatives and allow union representatives a genuinely important role in decision-making is a challenging one. For Cuthbert and Whitaker (1977:31) it is not feasible because either staff or their represent-

atives do not effectively contribute to decision-making processes or an element of negotiation is introduced:

> "If 'joint consultation' is envisaged narrowly as a forum for the discussion of areas of 'common interest', where management can inform and be informed of the opinions of those most likely to be affected by their decisions in areas where the 'managerial prerogative' apply, then the McCarthy thesis probably holds good.".

Cressey et al came to the same conclusion (1981:122,123):

> "We identified two main forms of consultation. The first form was effectively bargaining in all but name, but was not recognised formally by either group because this would imply a precedent in terms of what was a negotiable issue, or commitment to the outcome of the process. ....
> The other type of consultation existed as a forum where each group pursued their own incompatible views of participation: Both co-existed but neither had any real chance of success.".

The experience of Cressey and his colleagues was that despite the largely futile nature of the second type of consultation, it existed and even expanded but essentially for reasons that were superficial or concerned only with the potential value of the facility. These amorphous and insubstantial benefits were not valued by the representatives at Llandough. Formal consultative machinery did not exist in the hospital but at Area Health Authority level and one of the ASTMS representatives criticised it on the grounds that the meeting was too large and that it was not concerned with consultation but information-giving. Consequently, he explained, the ASTMS representatives did not attend the meetings and did not feel bound by the decisions coming from it, although the Area Officers of the Health Authority apparently expected them to. The representative felt that, "if they're not going to consult with me then don't insult me by pretending to. I say that as me but the staff as a whole feel that." and the same message came from one of the NALGO representatives, who considered that, "Where I think joint consultative committees fall down is that it makes no difference to what management

decide, necessarily.". The difficulty that management might face if it improved consultation was put to him:

Researcher: Why should management give more information to the staff, who, if they feel strongly enough about it, are actually going to start negotiating it. In other words, if you extend consultation, from the management point of view, might you not simply be giving the staff more issues about which to start negotiating, which is inviting trouble as a manager?

Graham: No, not really. Well you may, but not in a great proportion of things. With most things it should just stop with the consultation.

The relationship between consultation and negotiation was also highly significant for the ASTMS representative, who was actually the same as the one who had such clear ideas about the nature of consultation:

> "If they must have an Area forum they should concentrate solely exclusively and only on those items that they can actually negotiate, because I don't believe that what is supposed to be consultation, and isn't, is of any value at all, and I don't think it should happen at all. It's better not to happen.".

Consultation/Negotiation

The sentiments of these two representatives are, in essence, virtually identical, although with different emphases, and reflect crucially upon the nature of participation. They differ slightly about the amount of common ground about which there may be consultation without incurring dissention but they agree that sincere and successful consultation can only occur when elements of negotiation are accepted into the consultative process. Yet while it is true that by the appropriate selection and presentation of issues for discussion managment can exercise as if prerogatives and have its definition of

what is consultative rather than negotiable accepted by the staff side, it is also obvious and commonplace that staff and trade unions define many issues as negotiable and management accept the definition even though they may on many occasions prefer to regard the issues as either for consultation only or the subject of management prerogatives. In other words, negotiation will occur whether activities explicitly labelled 'consultation' exist or not.

There are clearly strong connections between the two and industrial relations negotiating, or collective bargaining, may be an equally valid source of participation. Daniel and McIntosh, for example, see all participative arrangements as eventually destined to take the form of collective bargaining through trade union representatives (1972:99,100):

> "The substantial movement, then, towards the concept of the single-channel of representation, ultimately the trade union, hinges upon recognition of the impracticality of distinguishing between what are exclusively consultative, as opposed to negotiating, issues and of management standing firm on any unilateral decision-making prerogatives. The movement also represents a recognition that joint consultation as a self-contained concept and purely joint consultative works councils have generally failed and failed lamentably.".

But a paradox about the relationship between consultation and collective bargaining is that although both conceptually and practically they may be indistinguishable they are also capable of distinction of great clarity. This may sound tortuous and unrealistic but it describes what became apparent during some of the research interviews, and was expressed most clearly in an exchange with one of the NALGO representatives about the value of discussions between staff and management:

Graham: I think there is a lot of point of sitting down but of course there will be disagreements.

Researcher: You want greater consultation; so we consult and management ways, 'This is what we're going to do.'. You say, 'Well no. We think you should do it this way.', but at the end of the day, management says, 'All right, we've consulted with you, we've listened to you, but I'm sorry but we're still going to do it this way.'?

Graham: Well we - the union - would have to decide whether it's a good enough case to do something about.

Researcher: In that case, I put this question to you. Is there any difference between consultation and negotiation?

Graham: Oh, yes, yes.

This reply was supported by evidence he supplied about what was to him a very obvious separation of function between the consultative and negotiating arrangements within the Health Authority.

Certainly not all the representatives maintained this distinction. One NUPE shop steward demonstrated how almost imperceptibly consultation can merge into negotiation:

> "A lot of things happen you see, Mr Campbell, and we don't know the reason why. We're kept in the dark and you see a thing is brought out and we've never even heard of it. A change in the working conditions, say, and anything involving the working conditions should be negotiated. You should come to some amicable agreement between us and management relating to the conditions concerned. But there's not enough.".

This implicit blending of consultative and negotiating processes similarly became apparent in a discussion with a second NUPE shop steward about the planning of a major extension to the hospital. He went to some trouble advocating the common sense and the value of consulting with the staff about the plans and in doing so he mentioned, "Personally, I think as a union you would aim for a higher staffing level anyway, to expect a reduction when the final thing opens up.".

In other words, he had an assumption that the consultative process would in practice contain major elements of negotiation. Another NUPE shop steward denied completely the existence of a distinction between consultative and nagotiating processes:

Researcher: Is it possible to actually say, 'These things are only for consultation, and are not for negotiation.'? Do you think it's ever possible to say that?

Dilys: I don't think so (laughs). No, where I'm concerned (chuckling).

Nevertheless, the ability to keep the two activities apart has been defended by some commentators. Warr and Wall (1975:110) define the difference:

> "In the United Kingdom there has developed a particularly sharp distinction between 'negotiation' and 'consultation'. These are both processes through which employees influence the organisation's decisions, but their content and machinery are traditionally quite separate. Negotiation takes place over wages and conditions of work; and all other management-worker issues are typically discussed through consultation. The essence of negotiation is that management may not introduce changes until agreement has been reached; unilateral alterations to hours of work or wage levels are thus not acceptable. Consultative processes, on the other hand, leave the final decision in the hands of management.".

In his analysis of consultation and negotiation in the NHS, Dyson (1979) initially appears to support this view but subsequently refers to the blurring that has occurred. "Consultation and negotiation are two distinct processes", he begins (p 73) but then admits, "It is easier to distinguish between the two processes in theory than in practice." (p 74). He further recognises that, "In reality, it is possible for one practice to shape gradually into the other." (p 74) and that, "It is in this way that issues which were once strictly consultative come within the scope of negotiation, whilst on a different occasion consultation might begin upon issues which were previously regarded as exclusively a managerial prerogative.".

Finally, he declares:

> "The important point here is that this process of change makes it totally artificial to separate consultation and negotiation in considering the formal relationships between management and staff in the NHS." (p 75).

It is this final type of contention rather than that of Warr and Wall that dominates the literature. Hebden and Shaw (1977:78) comment, for example, that:

> "Any attempt to institutionalise separately the areas of greater and lesser conflict, of greater and lesser consensus, will run the danger of damaging the credibility of the institutions for participation outside the bargaining arena.".

For Clegg, who outlines the nature of domestic bargaining requiring neither signed agreements nor recognised procedures, "There is no clear line between bargaining of this kind and consultation." (1976:249). Goodrich (1975:191) states that:

> "It is difficult to draw any very valid distinction between consultation and bargaining; yet consultation over changes in technique very often may mean more than a mere chance to bargain over terms of a change before it happens; it often means a real, though not always important, give-and-take of advice and opinion on the advisability of a change.".

This is echoed by Hawkins (1979:163):

> "In well-organized workplaces, management has seldom been able to resist indefinitely the demand for more joint *regulation*, and where traditional consultative arrangements have survived this probably reflects a simple lack of pressure for anything different.".

An alternative is that where traditional consultative arrangements survive it is in name only, as Clarke suggests (1980:12):

> "The line between negotiation and consultation is often very difficult to draw, and even where the distinction is maintained, it is far from rigidly observed in practice. But a wide range of issues beyond the traditional fields of wages and conditions are now negotiated within enterprises, and it is likely that in many enterprises any issue raised as a consultative matter will become one of negotiation if the shop stewards cannot obtain the satisfaction they seek.".

The use of consultative arrangements as a vehicle for negotiation is confirmed by the ILO (1981:198):

> "The fundamental importance of collective bargaining in many countries has been highlighted in this study, and it has been shown that in practice, negotiations are also conducted on works councils whenever it is a matter of co-decision, or even of extensive consultation on problems which are important for the workers.".

The stimulus to derive de facto collective bargaining rights from consultative arrangements can have its origins in one or more of three different processes. Staff may either ignore or reject consultative arrangements and deliberately only pursue involvement by collective bargaining; they may participate in consultative systems and explicitly support their purpose but in practice maintain no inhibitions about negotiating if necessary; and they may support consultative arrangements but consciously seek to exploit every opportunity to extend the bounds of what is negotiable. The approach of the TUC (1979 para 67) is that:

> "A merger between negotiating and consultative machinery is welcome, in that it facilitates the gradual transition of matters of substance from unilateral management control, through consultative procedures, and eventually to become matters for negotiation.".

It allows that there may be important exceptions but in general it does not envisage that there is a major role for separate consultative machinery. Burns and Doyle (1981:95) emphasise that:

> "As far as views and opinions are concerned consultation is two way. But the right to take decisions stays firmly with management. To that extent unions will always look on consultation as a limited way of furthering the members' interests. For the same reason unions will generally aim to take consultation a stage further - to *negotiation*.".

If then, by whatever means, consultation becomes an extension of collective bargaining, how does this outcome relate to the management's

intentions in introducing, maintaining or enhancing consultative participative arrangements? The answer is of course that in most instances it is undesirable and it is also very likely that it marks the very opposite of management's own objectives:

> "There is in fact what amounts to a growing gap between the managerial conception of employee participation and that of the trade unions. The overall union objective of greater *industrial democracy* defined as 'the achievement by workpeople collectively of a greater control over their work situation' contains within it much that runs counter to the hopes management hold for employee participation as a *technique* for increasing outstanding, involvement, and commitment and thereby enhancing the efficiency and profitability." (Cuthbert and Whitaker 1977:35).

Arrangements designed by management to promote integration may thus mutate into mechanisms that reinforce workplace pluralism. Dimmock (1977:124) agrees. He reminds us that this does not mean that enhanced participation has not been achieved, since:

> "if workers are provided with information by management as an exercise in 'good communications', it can offer the workforce a potential for genuine participation: they may subsequently decide, albeit contrary to management intentions, to use the information as a basis for affecting the future actions of management.".

There is even a possibility that workplace industrial relations can suffer if management actually succeeds in retaining limits of consultative arrangements that do not allow for negotiation. As Daniel and McIntosh (1972:100) report:

> "Joint consultative bodies have tended to degenerate rapidly and quickly to become to be seen as talking shops concerned with trivial matters such as cold chips in the canteen, without powers to deal with important issues. They have thus rapidly created disillusionment among managers, workers and their representatives with ideas of increased worker involvement through such means.".

But the analysis, which has considerable support, that consultation either evolves into negotiation or into insignificant discussion about trivia fails to recognise the full subtlety of employment relationships. This is illustrated in the following extracts from Cuthbert and Whitaker

(1977:35) which are intended to be statements confirming the orthodox analysis but which almost coincidentally reveal features of workplace interaction that require the analysis to be modified. The emphases are my own:

> "Another key factor in any consultative system and one with which few unions would disagree is that whatever the issue under discussion it must be capable of alternative solutions.".
>
> "Given this union approach, few purely consultative structures conceived by management as participation devices could survive no matter how much management might want to retain and develop them.".
>
> "Regardless of managerial intentions, in any consultative scheme utilized by management as a two-way communication process there will be issues raised which, given a strong union organisation, could become the subject of collective bargaining.".
>
> "Where a decision is taken to broaden the basis of decision-making, perhaps ostensibly on a consultative basis, into areas previously the exclusive prerogative of management, it cannot be assumed that management will have the authority or ability to impose a hard and fast cut-off point to prevent negotiation from taking place.".

To begin with, Cuthbert and Whitaker seem to assume that there will always be agreement about the existence of alternative solutions to different issues, when in fact there may even be dissension about the nature of the problem that should be discussed and both management and staff or their representatives may be able to influence the perceptions of the other about whether or not alternative solutions do exist and if so what they are. However, they then recognise that management's commitments to its consultative structures may vary substantially and indeed its desire to exclude negotiation from them may even vary between issues. Management may, for example, allow extensive negotiation in order to provide the impression or reality of participation whilst retaining decision-making on a consultative basis only for the more major items. Whether this can be achieved partly depends upon the degree of collective bargaining power the

staff possess and Cuthbert and Whitaker identify that a strong union organisation is one prerequisite for merging consultation and negotiation contrary to management's wishes. Other preconditions identified by the authors are the nature of management's authority and its ability. But finally, and probably unintentially, Cuthbert and Whitaker are rather more accurate about the nature of the relationship between consultation and negotiation. Instead of repeating that the two processes will almost inevitably combine they less specifically but more realistically conclude that management cannot automatically sustain the distinction in practice by simply stating that there is one.

Even if successful negotiation and consultation systems can be run in parallel, which Warr and Wall (1975) suggest they can, it may not indicate at all that management has been successful in obtaining agreement about its definitions. Provided negotiating mechanisms exist the staff or trade unions might be content to discuss with management on a consultative basis those issues to which it does not attach great significance. In such a situation, management would be wrong to assess its participation arrangements and, more generally, its industrial relations by the success of its consultative system. It would be more important to consider how and why the staff side split the management of the various workplace issues into the two systems. Dimmock (1977:129) recognises that the metamorphosis from consultation to negotiation is not pre-ordained but largely depends upon subjective assessment of its context:

> "The fate of joint consultation in much of British industry has been to suffer a general decline in proportion to the growth of workplace bargaining. In short, industrial workers who have perceived that they have an ability to control management

> decision-making have pursued informal and *ad hoc* forms of direct and indirect participation and have escaped the constrictions of joint consultation largely by ignoring it.".

Armstrong et al (1981:138) are a little more precise:

> "The implication .... is that no negotiated rule change in shop floor industrial relations is an isolated event; each occurs within the context of the ongoing bargaining relationship between the parties.".

They probably intend this to refer to the collective bargaining relationship but the statement has greater conceptual importance if it is interpreted as referring to the nature of the forces determining the negotiated order between the parties involved in workplace industrial relations. After all, management has a strong vested interest in restraining the encroachment of negotiation:

> "Managements may prefer to maintain the distinction between bargaining and consultation, since in the one case it enters into specific commitments, while in the other it retains the right to make decisions." Clarke (1980:12).

It must also not be ignored that there are ways in which this can be achieved, one of which is described by Loveridge (1976:19):

> "Many middle and line managers may feel threatened and instead of 'participating', will fall back on an increased reliance and propagation of 'management prerogatives'. Some procedural measures can be taken to structure the discussion. A clearer division between the agenda items considered appropriate for collective bargaining and those about which management are only prepared to consult may be provided by the existence of a formal arbitration procedure, as in the public services.".

Such arrangements do not, however, support the contention that management prerogatives are absolute. The prerogatives that management seeks to maintain and exercise in such circumstances are only as if prerogatives since:

> "Such procedures are useful only so long as they are not needed: once management feel the need to claim their formal prerogatives or employee representatives to assert theirs, the necessary trust may well have been dissipated." (p 19).

But as if prerogatives are exercised and in some situations negotiation does not enter into consultation. Dyson (1979:75) is dismissive of this fact, but mistakenly:

> "This shift is occurring continually in the NHS, although in the short and medium term local situations may remain static. Those managers who insist upon consultation only, can do so in relation only to their own local circumstances, and their views, although interesting, are irrelevant to managers with an extensively developed negotiating relationship with staff.".

Examples have already been given of entire industries with strong collective bargaining systems which have experienced severe alterations in the nature of industrial relations because of fundamental changes in the definition of tolerable management behaviour, but it is particularly erroneous to dismiss the maintenance of consultation only in some locations as inconsequential. Analysing such differences can contribute to a better understanding of how negotiated order theory applied in industrial relations.

Furthermore, there is evidence at national level that it is possible for management to inhibit negotiation in arrangements that it describes as participative or consultative. This is referred to in the report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy (1977:39,40):

> "Another source of concern was that board representation might conflict with the traditional role of trade unions, which is seen as one of opposing management in collective bargaining, not collaborating with it on the board. The objectives of board level representation and of collective bargaining may therefore be incompatible. The sharpest expression of this view came from the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union (EETPU), who thought that there was a fundamental and irreconcilable incompatibility between board representation and the collective bargaining function of trade unions. In their evidence to us, the EETPU describes two inter-related aspects of the problem: 'First, there is the institutional impossibility of separating the boardroom consultation from the potential negotiating implications behind the issues under discussion. Second, there is the irreconcilable split loyalties of the worker directors themselves.

> They will find it immensely difficult to separate their boardroom responsibilities dictated by business priorities from their representative functions derived from their relationship with the workforce.".

The EETPU concludes:

> "'Far better in the interests of those affected by a managerial decision that the responsibility for that decision is firmly laid at the management's door; then the collective bargaining machinery can oppose and moderate the impact of the decision when necessary'.".

The ability of management to impose its definition of consultation, and perhaps even to obtain the agreement of the staff to it, should not be underestimated. The research data revealed that there were clearly workplace themes about which the representatives would want to negotiate rather than simply be consulted but equally there have been times when they have accepted, even over major issues, management's definition of items for consultation only, and the conceptual distinction between consultation and negotiation seemed to have real meaning for a number of them. One of the NALGO representatives, who had stated that his union would seek to negotiate if management did not agree with its proposals after involving the union in a consultative process about an issue, was also adamant that there was a distinction between the two processes. The interesting point about his distinction was that he seemed to relate it to the types of formal structures associated with each:

> "But with consultation, for instance the Friday meeting every month with the Area officers, you could call that consultation. That's not negotiation because there's the plenary committees for negotiation. And the joint consultative committees, they're just consultation, aren't they. But with the plenary committees, which are management and trade union, that's negotiation, and the early retirement age for women was negotiated, agreed upon. That's negotiation.".

The conceptual difference for this representative was not strong enough for him to agree, if required to do so, to be formally bound

not to negotiate about issues presented to him for consultation but, as with other representatives, the degree of reality of the distinction for him suggests several contributory factors.

It could be that the Area officers were exercising considerable care in selecting the issues that they would choose to raise with the trade unions for consultative purposes so that they could know with some certainty that the trade unions would not wish to negotiate about them. Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, there may be an acceptance by the trade union representatives that they must adhere to the consultative process if that is the one under which management presents an issue to them, although this in turn could be related to the trade unions' assessment of the meaning of management declaring that an issue is for consultation only or presented only in a consultative context. This may be a means by which management declare its strength of interest and which accordingly the staff may only very rarely be inclined to challenge.

Collective Bargaining

At hospital level, local, informal consultation initiated by management enabled the staff representatives, sometimes unconsciously and sometimes by deliberate manipulation, to enter into bargaining processes that provided one of the most effective means of getting their wishes met. An example of the subconscious relationship came from one of the NUPE shop stewards, who appeared to be stressing the need for a collaborative relationship between staff management although its sustenance was derived from negotiation:

"I don't agree with bringing management down. I think you should work with management as far as we possibly can.".

"Instead of the union saying, 'Right, we'll do it our way.' and management saying, 'We'll do it our way.', if it was talked a lot more there could be more of a compromise, whereas neither would be undermined and management would still be getting what they want, but perhaps getting it a different way round.".

"A manager's got perhaps halfway to what she wants. Perhaps the manager will realise then, when it's been discussed with the trade union, that that decision was not quite what she could foresee at that particular point when she made it.".

Other NUPE shop stewards were far more blatant about exploiting bargaining opportunities. During a discussion about how management achieves change, a statement was put to one of the stewards:

Researcher: It seems nearly always a trade union will try to get something out of it.

Carol: Oh yes, yes.

Researcher: Do you think that's right?

Carol: Oh yes, definitely. They always seem to want to get a little bit more than the management is willing to sort of offer. Or they try to twist the management so that they can get a bit more out of management. I agree there.

Although she confirmed that the union representatives would always try to capitalise upon bargaining opportunities, this shop steward did not agree that it was right for this to occur on every occasion. Another NUPE shop steward was asked why this semi-adversarial relationship existed and again the significance of the fruits of bargaining were highlighted:

Colin: What we've got to do is try and get the best out of you, whilst you're trying to hold back to get the best.

Researcher: When you say, 'You get the best you can', what do you mean by, 'the best you can'?

Colin: Well, the best deal. I mean, all the little things we've had in the past, little disputes, or on the bonus, say. We go in and we discuss something, well we'll give in on one subject as long as we can get two back. You know what I mean, that type of thing, that's what I mean about getting the best.

Another NUPE representative stressed the mutual benefit that could derive from negotiation:

> "No matter what changes - you might want to change something, so do we. So I mean, all right if you want to change your way, then let's try changing something else our way. You've got to do that.".

Coming from trade union officials such opinions may appear predictable and unexceptional but they encompass the representative's implicit assessment of two fundamental features of the employing relationship. One is that there are many issues about which management can only make decisions with the consent of its workforce, and the other is that through trade union negotiation staff can achieve their own objectives in the organisation, even if these are incompatible with those of management. The nature of managerial authority is thus substantially modified. Clarke (1980:5) notes that:

> "As the volume of workplace bargaining expanded, so its scope slowly widened from the traditional areas of wages and working conditions. Shop stewards came to realise the strength that the new economic conditions gave them and increasingly sought to bargain on matters that had hitherto been regarded as within the management's prerogative;".

The result is that, "collective bargaining is the predominant means whereby workers in Britain participate in decision making in the enterprise." (p 8).

Many others have come to the same conclusion. The ILO (1981:170) has stated that:

> "Collective bargaining is undoubtedly a form of participation, even an advanced form, since it implies not only informing and consulting the workers but negotiating with them on matters which would otherwise be the subject of unilateral decisions. In a number of countries collective bargaining is the most important - or even the only - form of participation in decision-making in the undertaking.".

The report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations 1965-1968 (Donovan Report) declared that (para 212):

> "Properly conducted, collective bargaining is the most effective means of giving workers the right to representation in decisions affecting their working lives, a right which is or should be the prerogative of every worker in a democratic society.".

Consequently, the Commission argued that the scope of collective bargaining should be extended to include all the issues that employees regard as important at work. Ramsay (1976b:694) refers to circumstances in which the influence allowed to employees is less than that which they desire:

> "Both wages issues and job control, the two most prominent factors, are essentially matters of conflict between shop floor and management, in contrast to the 'common interest' emphasis of almost all official participation schemes. For this reason, there seems strong support here for the argument that the crucial means by which employees gain some control over management decisions is by collective bargaining - a view promoted by Allan Flanders, Hugh Clegg and a few more radical commentators than these, and a common view among union spokesmen themselves.".

More recently the TUC (1979) has reaffirmed that:

> "the major way to extend collective control of work people over their work situation will continue to be through the strengthening of trade union organisation, and the widening of the scope of collective bargaining." (p 25).

It elaborates that:

> "The main way to extend the area of joint control and to limit unilateral managerial prerogatives over matters of day-to-day management is to use the present structure of collective bargaining machinery to bring into the field of negotiations matters which are currently outside collective agreement. Coupled with parallel improvements in procedures, this can lead to a substantial extension of joint control over the immediate work situation. There is no logical reason why the collective bargaining process should only apply to the division of resources of the enterprise in terms of money wages." (p 26).

And one of the important conclusions of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy chaired by Lord Bullock was that although it concentrated upon trade union involvement on company boards it regarded this as inseparable from collective bargaining:

> "Rather, we believe that they are similar and complimentary processes. Both contain elements of co-operation and conflict, harmony and discord. Both by their very natures involve the mutual dependence of union and management. Perhaps most important, both have the same basic objective: to enable employees to participate in decision-making in the enterprise in which they work." (1977:124).

Even the CBI agrees with this view:

> "Participation will not succeed if it is seen by managers and employees as in some way weakening or conflicting with collective bargaining. It is essential that where there is collective bargaining and trades union machinery, the shop stewards should be involved in the participation arguments as well. Indeed, in some companies, the best way to develop participation will be through the extension of collective bargaining and it would be wrong for legislation to rule out this possibility." (1977:20).

There is thus a powerful inclination to regard collective bargaining as a form of participation but it does not attract universal accreditation. In a consultative paper, the SDP, for example, suggested that, "Collective bargaining has too often turned into a destructive stalemate instead of the means to a productive partnership." (1982:2). It is realised in the paper that (p 19), "It could be argued that extended collective bargaining should be an appropriate option for participation." but it continues:

> "We believe that industrial democracy would not succeed if it were merged with collective bargaining because it is trying to achieve different objectives.
> Collective bargaining is designed to produce an agreement between parties who see their interests initially as opposed. In these circumstances it tends to be adversarial by nature. Participation on the other hand is about better decision-making in the mutual interests of the parties involved. It is based on rights rather than power but of course the two systems will influence each other.".

Macfarlane describes the fear that economic individualists have about the extension of collective bargaining (1981:71):

> "The institution of collective bargaining throughout industry has increased the incidence and severity of industrial conflict; its extension through industrial democracy will increase the range of issues over which conflict arises, while making it more difficult for managements, uncertain about their role and position, to mount a firm response. The likely outcome is industrial chaos.".

Most observers, but certainly not all politicians and practising managers, would consider such an assessment to be extreme but the issue of whether or not extended collective bargaining induces greater division or joint responsibility is central to any discussion about whether it should be regarded as a form of participation. Brannen (1981:76) notes that:

> "Most accounts of collective bargaining viewed as an approach to participation have seen it primarily as a system in which trade unions can defend the interests of their members rather than enter into a more positive co-operative relationship with managements, so that it becomes a method of participation through opposition which allows worker representatives to avoid what they might otherwise consider intolerable conflicts of interest.".

This argument has been espoused by the ILO but only as part of a more subtle analysis that indicates that forms of participation, and whether or not they include collective bargaining, largely rely for their survival on the extent to which they reflect existing employing relationships:

> "although some participation schemes rely on areas of common interest between workers and their employers .... it is considered in some countries and occupational groups that the interests of the two parties, on fundamental issues at least, are naturally divergent. So, in the latter case, participation is regarded essentially as an effort to reconcile the contradictory interests of management and labour by frankly admitted confrontation in the shape of bargaining aimed at a mutually acceptable compromise. So it is that collective bargaining at the level of the undertaking, which enables agreement to be reached on many matters of direct concern to management and labour, is often regarded as a procedure for participation in decisions and is in fact almost the only kind of participation to be accepted by both employers and workers in a good many countries where bargaining at that level is a current practice.".

Some commentators have concentrated on the potential for collective bargaining to reduce conflicts of interest between staff and management, although for some this is a real achievement and for others it is superficial. Hawkins (1979:176,177) believes that:

> "As the scope of collective bargaining is extended, so the sense of *mutual* responsibility for the enterprise as a whole may increase. The experience of productivity bargaining proved that extended joint regulation *can* be an integrative process and that old habits and attitudes may be modified through institutional change.".

Collective bargaining may at least contribute to the maintenance of the status quo:

> "The corporation's ability and willingness to deal with the sort of issues which trade unions raise in negotiation ensures that in the eyes of the employee it is a 'reasonable' employer, which makes it unnecessary, as far as they are concerned, to ask more fundamental questions." (Purcell 1979:28).

Fox goes further and one of the main themes of his work has been that (1974:208):

> "for management to concede to collective bargaining and other means by which employees or their representative can participate in making of some kind of decision may well strengthen rather than weaken their control.".

And for Hyman a Marxist analysis of the effect of collective bargaining on the employing relationship allocates it significance which is almost only marginal:

> "The exercise of managerial control is indeed rendered less arbitrary - and this is perhaps the most substantial outcome of trade union bargaining activity - but the oppressive consequences of managerial priorities are not radically altered." (1975:192).

There can be no doubt, however, that collective bargaining provides staff and/or trade unions with a very real power to influence operational decisions at least. It can be used to challenge the exercise of managerial prerogatives and can even be introduced into participative arrangements designed to be integrative. A simple example of the first provoked a strike of mechanics at the largest

distributors of Rolls Royce cars when the management wanted to change their starting time. The Times (29.6.82.) reported that the strike was in its sixth week and that it arose because:

> "The company now wants it changed to an hour later, but the mechanics at the company's depot in Battersea, south London, say the time cannot be altered without consent.".

Chell describes how bargaining was introduced into a worker director scheme. Seven such schemes in private companies were surveyed and (1983:499,500):

> "by and large the worker directors were responsible for very little effective change. The outstanding exception was company A. There we were given the impression that the worker director fought hard on behalf of his constituency, and in one difficult period of recession he managed to negotiate a significant reduction in the number of employees to be made redundant. He appeared to stem managerial authority and achieve a balance of power in which all concerned at senior management and directorial levels could work.".

These examples show that the extension of collective bargaining or negotiation is not necessarily the explicit policy of management but something to which it gives tacit consent. Walker (1979:16) examines the implications of substantive and procedural rule-making in industrial relations. He concludes that:

> "such a concept of industrial relations rules says nothing about how long the rules will remain unchanged or the extent to which the actors accept them.",

and that:

> "when industrial relations rules are defined in this way, there is no reason to suppose industrial relation systems are inherently stable.".

Indeed, the extension of collective bargaining may so significantly alter the rules that both management and trade unions seek to obscure the degree of dynamism in the industrial relations system:

> "Management is well aware of this revolutionary aspect of collective bargaining, as are the unions. Both, however, have at times sought to obscure it for partisan purposes: management with the hope that it might successfully assert a 'proper' definition of collective bargaining which would confine it within prescribed bounds, thereby limiting its challenge to managerial power; the unions with the intent of quieting the fears of those who resist changes in the social order." (Chamberlain 1967:105).

Contrary to the impression given by Chamberlain, dynamism in the industrial relations system can be generated by management as well as trade unions. This is one of the fundamental tenets of the Conservative government and the victory in the Falklands was used to promote it during the 1982 rail dispute. The Sunday Times reported (4.7.82.) that:

> "Mrs Thatcher declared yesterday that 'the Falklands factor' has irrevocably changed British attitudes and that the leaders of ASLEF, the train drivers union, do not understand 'the new mood of the nation'.
> .... The Prime Minister appealed to every train driver ' to put his family, his comrades and his country first' by continuing to work".

In an adjoining column, Fryer reported on the train strike and specifically referred to the change that had occurred in the attitude of the British Rail management:

> "Although traditionally BR has been willing to fudge issues, the mood of the Board has hardened dramatically. While both managers and ASLEF leaders privately admit that the Scottish rosters, although technically on trial, would have been impossible to withdraw once started, BR has simply lost patience with ASLEF.".

Armstrong et al (1981:137) propose that in fact an equilibrium is maintained in collective bargaining relationships:

> "In many worker/manager relationships there appears to be an ongoing sense of a credit and debit balance, the state of which may influence the settlement of any given issues. ....
> If the bargaining relationship is though of as a win-some-lose-some affair, it then becomes possible for one of the parties to cite the current state of debt or credit as a legitimising argument. This sense of continuity applied even though the rule

> under discussion may be quite unrelated to the issue on which the debt was originally incurred.".

It is probably unrealistic to regard the relationship as a whole in this manner, but what Armstrong et al are touching up on is the crucial realisation that what is negotiable is itself negotiable.

I had been unaware of this at the beginning of the research and the force of the realisation was so strong that I can even specify the date on which it occurred. Until then I had always assumed that there were certain characteristics about some issues which virtually pre-ordained that they had to be negotiated with the trade union representatives, despite strong logical arguments that should be unnecessary since as a person hierarchically superior to others I should possess the authority to direct staff to do what their contracts of employment allowed. Reflection upon the source of my sense of what issues had to be negotiated produced a variety of possibilities. It could be a personality trait to prefer to persuade rather than order; it is not 'good' managerial practice to be dictatorial; working relationships rely on goodwill; a compromise might be possible which still achieves the main objective; the possibility of industrial action is reduced; appearing to be unreasonable might make the staff and shop stewards more disgruntled and active; issues can slot into categories of negotiable subjects defined by precedence; firmness can be construed as intellectually simplistic, politically right wing and insensitive to the dignity of fellow men where as negotiation is often considered to be intellectually sophisticated, apolitical and demonstrative of regard for one's workforce; and in the event of a dispute support might not be provided by higher management if no opportunity has been given for collective bargaining to take place.

The revelation after a number of years of exercising management responsibility that these characteristics need not be self-determining may indicate naivety, particularly because of the obvious alteration in the national industrial relations climate under the Thatcher government. The economic recession, together with the Conservative government's response to it, its industrial relations ideology, its industrial relations legislation and its determination, have radically altered the nature of national industrial relations. Far fewer issues are even brought to a negotiating forum and of those that are a much higher number have had to be conceded by trade unions and others have only been supported with substantially diminished strength. However, although such features have been symptomatic of the changes in national industrial relations they gave little idea of how the change had been achieved, particularly since the local industrial relations climate appeared to be unaffected. I therefore assumed that there was such a distinction between local and national industrial relations that although the latter might appear to be very sensitive to government policy the former could not be subject to similar influences. In other words, I understood that the climate of negotiation could be altered nationally, but without knowing the processes or methods involved I did not believe this to be possible at operational level.

I realised my error on 10 February 1982. A new consultant haematologist had taken up post and found that only doctors and nurses would collect blood from the blood bank refrigerators and without discussing it with me he had sent a letter to all wards and departments informing them that any member of staff could remove the blood from storage. The obvious implication was that the portering staff would be required to do this in future and I tried to explain to the consult-

ant haematologist that I wanted to discuss his letter with the porters' NUPE representatives. I said something to the effect that to he and I the job was, "just a job which porters should do", but that to the porters it was negotiable. I thought this would make him realise the necessity of consultation but his simple response was, "Why do they think it is negotiable". The problem was that here was a reasonable, intelligent man who knew that it was not necessary for doctors and nurses only to take blood from the fridge and that it was agreed that it was reasonable to expect porters to do it, so why could they not nust be told to do so in future? Put this way, the enquiry produces the same inarticulatness, confusion, frustration and uncertainty as that following a question from the child who has examined what it regards as an important feature of life, pursued its own simple logic and found it inexplicable e.g. why is ice cold, why does God do bad things, and where does the light go when you move the switch? And it is equally unsatisfactory to reply, "Don't ask so many questions"!

> In essence, the answer to the consultant's question is:
>
> "I could just tell them to do it, but the staff have their own implicit definition of what is negotiable, so do I, and we probably agree that this issue falls within the definitions of both of us.".

My definition is constructed from some or all of the considerations already listed, and possibly others. The staff definition, which will consist of a number of variations, because of the differences between the large number of individuals, because of the differences between the occupational groups, and, most significantly of all, because of the differences between the shop steward and members, will certainly be derived from other considerations, but also from some or all of the management criteria.

From this analysis of how issues derive their status of 'negotiable', it is possible to postulate the following axioms:

1. Both sides (more accurately described as coalitions of interest) have their own definitions of what is negotiable.
2. The definitions are largely implicit.
3. Each side has its own variations in its definitions, although they are probably more numerous on the staff side.
4. The internal variations produce explicit and implicit reappraisal of the collective definition, which is therefore internally dynamic.
5. The definitions respond to external influences, such as time, changes in the other side's definition, and alterations in the organisation. They are therefore externally dynamic.

Any analysis of how issues become negotiable must therefore be multi-dimensional. The process cannot be described in terms of factors which may be divided into those which determine that some subjects will be negotiated and those which determine others will not be. Minimal additional dimensions are those of time and interaction. However, this multi-dimensionality does not prohibit elaboration of the main considerations the participants to negotiation might identify if asked to. What it does is to make it clear that such elaboration does not describe the relations between the various consideration, nor the way in which the relationships change, and therefore, most crucially, nor the very real but ephemeral processes by which issues occurring at the workplace become, or do not become, subject to negotiation. To amass all the items required to build a power station does not in itself produce a power station and, far less, explain how electricity is generated. Some attempt is made here to elaborate upon some of the

factors that influence whether issues become negotiable or not but it should now be clear that they lie upon only two of the axes involved in locating negotiable issues.

Negotiations may occur when the process of negotiation itself is all that is required in order to obtain agreement, or when the concessions which it is anticipated will be required in order to achieve agreement are insignificant or inconsequential and therefore management can confidently expect to fulfil its objective.

In addition, for many years there have been strong influences upon management that have produced an orthodoxy of negotiatory management. This is still true despite prominent use in slected areas of 'macho' management. Professional management organisations promote a conciliatory managerial approach and it has been applied and used by previous governments, who have thus set an example to managers throughout the country. Futhermore, the entire body of modern management theory and teaching advocates the exercise of management through collective bargaining and/or a human relations approach. The orthodoxy is reinforced by the enormously powerful forces of the desire to have the approval of one's superiors and to compete successfully with comparable managers.

The maintenance of goodwill is another source of encouragement to manage by consent, for two reasons. In service industries in particular there are certainly duties which are undertaken or hours which are worked only because goodwill exists. Once informal work practices develop that are advantageous to management their maintenance becomes dependent upon sustained goodwill. More fundamentally, it can be argued

that no society or any group in it can be lead except by acquiescence or consent. This at least requires the absence of any positive subversion. However, the concept of 'goodwill' again demonstrates the amorphous nature of industrial relations components. Acts of goodwill must be those which are not formally, explicitly or automatically expected by the person or organisation which benefits from them, and quite obviously expectations can oscillate immensely over a large and equally unstable number of items. Whilst there may be difficulties during a period of transition, either party to collective bargaining can markedly alter what can be expected to be negotiated and what the outcome of negotiation would be.

The prospect of industrial action if negotiation is refused or fails to satisfy the staff side affects managerial propensity to negotiate in a number of ways. Most obviously, it seriously disrupts the activity of the enterprise and may even prevent it completely. Additionally, managerial orthodoxy implies that a strike demonstrates managerial failure, and a strike is a clear indication of failure to superiors and in comparison with peers. Industrial action in itself does not resolve the dispute at issue, and even when it is called off it may be because management has had to back down. If management 'win' the dispute it may make the staff side even more anxious to create another dispute in which <u>it</u> can win.

If the staff representatives are contemplating industrial action, it can be important for management to be able to display to the individual members of staff that is has exercised reasonableness before the management of the issue reached such a stage. If it had refused to negotiate at all it would be exceptionally difficult to do

this and staff representatives would almost certainly exploit it in order to enhance their own apparent reasonableness. It used to be generally contended that if management refused to negotiate it forced members and representatives to be militant in order to achieve anything, and this may still be true at operational levels, but at least for a temporary period this no longer appears to be true nationally.

Personalities naturally affect the conduct of industrial relations and on the management side, for example, there may be those who find it unpleasant to be determined with staff, others who are afraid to do so, others who sympathise with trade unions, and others who feel that it is instinctively, religiously or intellectually right to discuss issues with the staff.

Refusal to negotiate or refusal to compromise may imply that management resents the existence of trade unions, is autocratic, old fashioned, inconsiderate to its staff, and politically right wing. Negotiation may occur therefore in order to avoid this inference.

Reference has already been made to the fact that in the past managers have sometimes been very anxious not to negotiate about issues which could then establish new categories of negotiable subjects, thus precipitating negotiation about other issues previously the exclusive concern of management. This has been the practical manifestation of beliefs in managerial prerogatives, although there can be no doubt that the scope of negotiation has increased substantially in recent years, but again some managements are now reasserting their ability to decide unilaterally.

As a final example of a factor influencing how the categories of negotiable issues are defined, negotiation will inevitably be encouraged if it forms part of the management style of higher levels of management or if more senior managers will not automatically endorse their subordinates decisions in the event of a dispute but will assess the issue according to their own criteria, almost as an arbitrator, and how it should be resolved, quite possible in opposition to the lower manager.

The necessity of considering this final influence may have purely pragmatic origins, since people like to be obviously over-ruled, but it may also derive from the signals that such decisions represent about senior management's desire to implement or exercise a management style or ethos of participation, which is the employment construct with which this review of participative processes began.

Chapter Eight

ATTITUDES TO INNOVATION

The research data presented so far has concentrated on the trade union shop stewards' and staff organisation representatives' perceptions of the existing employing relationship, particularly the one between management and themselves. From the data it should be fairly self-evident that this was an issue that they had immediate, positive ideas about and could discuss with some confidence. Rather strikingly, therefore, none of the representatives was able to respond when given carte-blanche to describe how they would wish to change the relationship or its accompanying structures.

For example, one of the NALGO representatives was asked:

> "If you were able to get anything changed which would actually improve either the way people feel about their jobs in this hospital or improve relationships between staff and management, between trade union representatives and management, what would you do?".

He was unable to answer and asked to be given time to think about the question. Similarly, a NUPE representative was asked how he would like the staff "to have more say" but he was not able to give any examples. Another NUPE shop steward was asked, "Are there things which you wish you could do something about, or that you think that you could do something about but you haven't been given the chance?" and again no response was forthcoming.

It might be pertinent to recall that virtually all of the topics raised as examples of the ones which the representatives had become

involved in, or would have liked more information about, or did not believe management had handled correctly, or would have liked to have been involved in, were ad hoc problems without wider significance for the particular group of staff represented or for the longer-term organisation of the hospital. There thus seems to be both an implicit and explicit absence of desire for either structural or procedural change in the employing relationship and this outlook may derive from a number of largely alternative conditions. Does it, for example, indicate the success of the existing arrangements? Are the representatives unable to hypothesise or by proactive? Do they simply lack the desire for more extensive or intensive participation? Does it represent the imposition of limitations upon shop stewards' aspirations? Or, more generally, does it reveal the strength of conditioning about the nature of the employing relationship as a whole?

The responses to these enquiries have a substantial bearing upon the nature of participation practised and its potential, if any, for development. Ramsay's "sceptical stance towards participation" (1976b:696) is reinforced by a survey he completed which indicated that workers personally had no enthusiasm for participation even though appropriate structures existed within their workplace and Goodrich makes the point that reacting to the exercise of the management function does not automatically imply a wish to contribute to it:

> "It may still be pointed out that all this is merely a negative resentment *against* control and not specifically a positive demand *for* control. .... The desire to be let alone, to be free from the irksomeness of control by others, is not identical with the desire to co-operate actively in the work of controlling. .... Men might be ungovernable by authority without being thereby ready to govern themselves." (1975:34).

Walker (1974) has attempted to devise a comprehensive and systematic means of determining which types of participation, if any, will manifest

themselves in different sets of circumstances:

> "The situational factors determine the *participation potential* of a particular enterprise; the human factors determine how far and in what ways the potential in the situation is translated into reality. The human factors may be termed *workers' propensity to participate* and *managements' acceptance of workers' participation.*" (p 12).

He regards workers' propensity to participate as possessing three aspects:

> "(a) Workers' attitudes and objectives in relation to participation;
> (b) Workers' perceived power to participate;
> (c) Workers' capacities to participate." (p 14).

Walker's analysis thus converges upon the same features that were raised for scrutiny after considering the Llandough representatives' unwillingness or inability to suggest how the employing relationship could be improved. The remainder of this chapter is mainly concerned with examining the potential for participation emanating from the nature of these characteristics amongst the representatives at Llandough.

Interest Orientations

Preliminary consideration should perhaps be given to the kinds of issues that staff and their representatives would like to be more involved in. Examples of the sorts of subjects that the representatives gave their attention to were listed in Chapter 6 but is it possible to generalize more about their interests. For participative purposes they can be defined in two different ways, either as broad topic areas or as the activities of different levels of management in the enterprise. Ramsay (1976b:694) reports that:

> "We asked respondents at which of these levels they wanted more say. In all, 53 per cent wanted more say *only* at job level, 31 per cent wanted more say at *both* levels; 6 per cent opted for more say only in management of the company as a whole, and

> 10 per cent proved uninterested in either level. Thus, nine out of ten of these workers wanted more say personally. Most wanted this in regard to their immediate working environment - only just over a third wanting whole-company decisions. This pattern fits in with H. Holter's findings in Norway and with a recent Opinion Research Centre survey.".

One of the weaknesses of such a survey, as Ramsay admits, is that there can be no certainty about whether the respondents comprehend the notions about which they are required to comment, such as 'participation' and 'decisions', and if they do whether their understandings are mutually consistent and consistent with those of the researchers. In the Llandough research an attempt was made to identify whether there were subjects or decision-making levels in which the representatives wished to have greater participation by examining their responses to the existing workplace environment.

It became overwhelmingly apparent that to the representatives the concerns of the staff were limited to features of their day-to-day organisation and their personal terms and conditions of service. A NUPE shop steward was asked:

Researcher: What are the other sort of things that annoy the men most about working?

Colin: It's an accumulation of little things actually.

Another NUPE shop steward observed that, "A lot of aggravation in this department is trivial, stupid things.". Similarly, when the Society of Radiographers' representative was asked what types of issue caused dissatisfaction, she replied, "I think it's a group of very small things really, that add up together.", and another NUPE shop steward explained, "They moan a lot about petty little things really, but I suppose it can snowball.". She gave as an example differences of opinion between individual members of staff, which could create a more

extensive bad atmosphere.

However, issues of more specific substance or wider implication were raised by a few of the representatives. Some categories were provided by one of the NUPE shop stewards, for example:

Bernard: I just think that all grades of staff should have more say in their place of work, in how the job is run.

Researcher: Well what do you mean by that? It's very vague isn't it.

Bernard: Staffing, equipment and possibly working relationships with other members of staff.

When further precision was sought he gave the calculation of shift rotas as an example of a staffing problem. The construction of the menus was clearly one of the central concerns of the NUPE shop steward in the catering department:

Researcher: Supposing J. revised the menus?

Carol: I think I'd like to be sat in on menus. I really would. .... I'd love to sit in.

Researcher: So you would be interested in the menus because of the effect on the workload?

Carol: No, no, not from that point of view, but from the point of view some of these menus are too heavy.

Researcher: You mean for the patients?

Carol: Yes, I mean who'd - I wouldn't want .... ,

and she continued by describing some of the combinations of meals. The same topic arose in another context:

Carol: When we apply for anything and they say, 'Oh you can't have it because money is short.' well this when they will pick up on the menus - 'Well surely if we're that short of money we could save them pounds on those menus.'.

Researcher: So, coming back to how I started, clearly the staff have suggestions for improving the service and they see ways of actually saving money on menus?

Carol: Oh yes, yes.

Researcher: Which aren't coming through at the moment?

Carol: Definitely.

This representative's department was one of those which would be most significantly affected by the construction of a new maternity unit within the next few years and she expressed the wish to know more about the unit, but only after her attitude towards it had been expressly sought. Other representatives also stated their interest in this development but again only after they had been prompted to think about it.

Two representatives described their dissatisfaction with the management structure of their department and felt that the staff they represented should be more formally involved. Although in different departments, both complained about the problems of having a consultant member of the medical staff as the ultimate head of department. This arrangement had been specifically recommended by the DHSS for pathology departments comparatively recently and it was to this that one of the ASTMS shop stewards was referring when he concluded:

> "To sum it all up, the major complaints are principally with DHSS organisational treatment of MLSOs in general. You and your local colleagues can't do anything about it.".

The other representative believed that because a doctor ran the department the professional/technical staff were inadequately consulted, which gave the impression of being a professional slight and a failure to exploit the knowledge and expertise of other staff in the department. The representative also felt that the non-medical

staff would be able to contribute constructively to the shaping of clinical policies but were given little opportunity to do so.

Interest in decision-making beyond departmental level was extremely restricted. One NUPE shop steward spoke of how her members felt:

> "They're interested in the decisions of the Health Authority as far as they affect them, yes, but they are also interested in the liaison on wards. That's to them a prime thing in the working conditions.",

and she gave as an example the degree to which staff got on with the people they worked with and in particular the personality of the sister of the ward on which individual housekeepers worked. The same representative demonstrated very well just how clearly delineated the interest of the staff is between decision-making processes generally and the possible personal consequences of individual decisions. The decision to require one hundred posts to be lost, if necessary through redundancies, had emerged after a number of health authority members and senior managers had either agreed or not disagreed that a certain sum of money had to be saved, that it should be saved by losing staff, that the number of staff to be lost should be one hundred, and that the Health Authority should rescind its policy of no redundancies. The way that the staff reacted to the decision to lose posts in this way was discussed with the representative:

Researcher: Were they concerned about how that decision had been made?

Dilys: Yes. Well, I don't know - they were more concerned about who was going to go and how many redundancies there were going to be. I don't thing they were concerned who made it so much as just what was going to happen.

Researcher: Did they discuss, or did you yourself think at all about, whether it was justified or not?

Dilys: No.

One of the ASTMS shop stewards confirmed that this attitude was not confined to just one group of staff:

> "The members of the group are not really very interested in Area policy, only when that Area policy has a noticeable impact on their own personal pay and conditions of service, and then, and only then, do they seem to have any interest in the issue.".

One of the NALGO representatives was enthusiastic to extend consultation but again the desire seemed to be for more involvement in workplace issues rather than wider policy-making:

Researcher: You seem to give the impression you think there's greater scope for consultation?

Graham: Oh yes, there is, definitely.

Researcher: About what sort of things? What sort of subjects do you think that there should be greater consultation about?

Graham: Well shifting of work and shifting of personnel, for instance.

In many commercial companies the provision of financial information to staff and their representatives is regarded as one of the key elements of any policy to involve staff but although the Health Authority distributed budgetary information to trade union representatives, in Llandough one of them at least regarded it as futile:

> "Financial presentation's a waste of time. Most trade union representatives don't want to know. They don't do anything with it anyway, except when it is part of a specific issue that they have to deal with. They really don't want to know otherwise. Frankly, the AHA waste an awful lot of paper on trade union representatives. What they need is information when they ask for it.".

This opinion could have three alternative derivations. It could be that the good intentions of senior officers are not being appreciated; or that there is a deliberate policy to manage information, by giving

the impression that information is being released when in reality it is only the inconsequential or incomprehensible; or that either the Health Authority or trade union movement has failed to provide the representatives with adequate training to know how to interpret management data in a way that they could use to promote their members' interests. Indeed, this last possibility has implications that permeate nearly all the discussion in this chapter. It raises the dilemma of whether improvements in participation should merely be those that respond to the wishes of the staff or those which others seek to achieve and which require that staff and their representatives must be given training to know how to use.

Shop Steward Inclination

The range of participative arrangements that are achievable (and whether or not training in participation, if it is decided that it is a prerequisite for success, is accepted and/or successful) will substantially depend upon the attitudes of staff to participation and, in those enterprises where there is a well-developed collective bargaining structure, upon the inclination of trade unions and their representatives. Two of the trade unions most active in the NHS are specified by Cuthbert and Whitaker as amongst those which are the keenest to obtain greater involvement. They observe (1977:32) that there are:

> "those unions which, whilst adhering to the notion of expanding the scope of collective bargaining as the primary means of developing employee participation, are not ready to dismiss peremptorily the prospects of an additional element of 'revitalized' consultation machinery in the shape of works councils and committees. The assumption is that any such machinery would be union dominated and that through it unions would have an opportunity to influence fundamental company policy decisions outside the established parameters of collective

> bargaining. Unions looking in this direction include NALGO, NUPE, the GMWU and, more surprisingly, the NUM.".

This was certainly not obvious amongst the Llandough representatives. The kind of participation they were concerned about has already been described and it was difficult to elicit any proposals for improving the participative arrangements or to generate responses to hypothetical alterations. A suggestion was put to one of the NUPE representatives, for example:

Researcher: Supposing we had a meeting and I gave you budgetary information about how the hospital was doing and how the housekeeping department was doing. Would there be any benefit in doing that?

Mary: I don't think it would be of any interest to me, I'm sorry.

There was really only one representative who was eager for significantly greater formal liaison, but it appeared that this was on the basis that as a NUPE shop steward she had little to lose rather than because she had envisaged what could be achieved. When asked if she felt that she had enough say in the way things were run, she answered, "Not at the moment, no, very little.". Nevertheless, the housekeepers she represented worried a lot about the standard of cleanliness and personally she sympathised with managers for the job they had to do. She suggested that there should be regular, formal meetings between the head of department, shop stewards and supervisors and considered that there was scope to improve the liaison between the departmental head and her staff. Discussion about the departmental budget would be of interest to her but she would not pass on budgetary information to her members. She wished to have regular meetings between all the NUPE representatives and myself but could not describe

what sort of things might be discussed. She was able, however, to summarise her interest:

> "I just think the Health Authority should feed as much information back as they can to the unions, because it gives them a very different view, doesn't it. It you've got a lot of information you can see things from different angles than if you've only got a certain amount.".

The inference is that more information and involvement may lead to greater trade union identification with the problems of management. Another representative thought that there could be greater co-operation but also confirmed this was unlikely to be a majority view:

Researcher: But are you saying then that approached the right way, trade unions will actually co-operate in cost-cutting exercises?

Graham: I think they <u>should</u> and I think it should be natural wastage. What you've got to say to people is they've got to work harder, and I think in some places they could work harder.

Researcher: But wouldn't other trade unions, or possibly even other representatives in NALGO, say, 'No, that's not our job. We're going to defend our members, the interests of our members to the last?

Graham: That's right. Yes, yes, they would.

Thus the fate of any new participative arrangements will partly depend upon the degree to which the staff pursue a unitary or pluralist approach. Tannenbaum captures this point, initially rather over-zealously (1966:100):

> "A number of authors have raised serious questions about the generality and practicality of participation. For one thing, the logic of participation hinges on the very crucial assumption of a substantial commonality of interest between employer and employee.".

Less precisely but more accurately, he subsequently advises that (p 100):

> "The expectations and ideology of the workforce may represent further limitations on the applicability of the participative approach.".

Fox (1971:41) also relates the prospects of participation to the nature of workers' orientations to the employment relationship:

> "As with all the other possible sources of legitimacy, subordinates may or may not share the relevant values. If they do not, management will gain nothing by such a change. If they do, they may, as we have already noted, value procedural participation for terminal or instrumental reasons or both. A terminal preference reflects ideological or cultural values which may or may not be adequately met by the procedural changes. If the preference is an instrumental one, subordinates will value the new procedural norms - and reward management with the sought-for legitimacy - only insofar as they prove effective for the pursuit of substantive aspirations.".

For Normal Tebbit, as Secretary of State for Employment, quoted in the South Wales Echo, the position was straight-forward:

> "I see no distinction of interest between workers on the shop floor or the office floor or on the boardroom floor. Their mutual interest is the success of their firms." (21.7.82.).

None of the Llandough representatives perceived the unity of management and staff as unreservedly as this but a small number showed some inclination towards it. One NUPE shop steward, speaking of her members, declared:

> "I mean, they're earning a good wage. This is what I try to get through to them first of all. 'We expect a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and I think you're earning a fair pay up here. You wouldn't get it anywhere else. You go outside and you try and get it.'.".

She disagreed with other NUPE shop stewards who would on principle support any member, regardless of the circumstances:

> "If I think they are in the wrong, they are in the wrong.".

One of the NALGO representatives disagreed with trade unions being too avaricious but admitted that he was being idealistic:

> "They shouldn't try to get the most. They should just try to get what is fair.".

Even one of the NUPE shop stewards who was one of the most active negotiators was enthusiastic that increased information and involvement would reduce the amount of staff-management conflict:

> "Cost-effectiveness for instance - bring the union in on a discussion, say, 'Look we want to do this but the cost ....', and show why, not just say it and then expect us to believe you, but really bring a union in on the discussions so that they can see for themselves, 'Well that's fair enough, we can't possibly do that because the cost would be too high, so we've got to do it another way, not so good but it's a bit cheaper and still giving a fairly good service.'. That's non-existent really, isn't it, in this hospital. I don't know what the policy is actually on that, generally. I don't suppose the Health Authority would like it.".

Towards the end of a long discussion about a specific problem he confirmed:

> "Well this is what I'm saying. Until you put the management's problems over then how am I to know how to think. I mean, at the moment I've given you my answer about what I thought, but in just the short discussion now of you saying to me these little things about what have happened, and it's enough to sway me. So therefore if there were fuller discussion, even if it wasn't to disclose that - discussions more on the line - as a shop steward, and he brought into what's happening around us, then I'd be more aware myself perhaps. But the moment I've only got the feelings of the members and my own feelings to accumulate together and arrive at a conclusion.".

When some of the complexities of budgetary control were examined with him he displayed the frankness and honesty with which he was prepared to concur with the management view. A point was made regarding releasing budgetry information about one department:

Researcher: It might not be in my interests to let the staff know, particularly if they are underspent, because all those staff will do is put pressure on to get more money spent, whereas across the hospital I know it's only just balancing out.",

to which the NUPE shop steward responded, "True, true, yes, that argument does stand up.".

However, when another issue was considered, the planning of the new maternity unit, this shop steward also demonstrated just how easily and surreptitiously the enhancement of information-distribution and consultation could develop into negotiation:

> "If we were brought in on it I'm sure we could give assistance, because there are certain things that are going to crop up that's going to cause, perhaps, disputes, which if they are dealt with at an early stage we could give answers to now and say, 'Look, we suggest that so-and-so be done this way. Would you look at it and see if that's possible?'.".

What, one wonders, would happen if the suggestion was not possible or if the shop stewards disagree with the criteria that management used to come to this decision?

In his conclusion to his survey, Ramsay (1976b:695) reports that:

> "All too often the managements have tried to represent an offer of participation to workers as an act of benevolence, deserving response in terms of greater employee loyalty, co-operation and effort. But the opinions I cite imply that workers consider participation is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. On the face of it this is entirely reasonable: industrial democracy should involve a redistribution of power, which enables those whose power increases to assert their own interests more effectively. Yet this point is passed over by all but a few outside the commentators in the union's own ranks.
> This conclusion, with its blasphemous suggestion that management and worker interests may conflict, also implies that far from resolving conflict, the idea and expectations from participation may themselves turn out to cause dispute.".

And Cuthbert and Whitaker (1977:32) remind us that:

> "there are those unions which emphasize that they are in business to represent their members' interests and in consequence should not seek to influence management other than through the development and extension of collective bargaining. Thus works councils or worker directors, whether trade union based or not, are seen as unnecessary distractions,".

Although possibly not the policy of their unions nationally, this was the response largely received from the Llandough representatives. The majority had little sympathy with the problems of exercising the

management function or those who did it and some displayed an intense aversion to any proposals which might be interpreted as portraying them in co-operation with management. One of the NUPE shop stewards possessed this attitude almost instinctively:

Researcher: You know the TUC is in favour of industrial democracy, and extending industrial democracy. Well the sort of thing they've got in mind is instead of a manager saying, 'This is where you work.', you sit down and jointly arrange it.

Mary: Oh no. I don't agree with that.

When it was mentioned to her that trade unions such as the EETPU disagreed with the TUC's policy on the grounds that the involvement of trade unions in participative systems could confuse collective bargaining and negotiating arrangements, she explained that she felt the same way. She had no concern for the level or quality of service in her department and nothing could be allowed to jeopardise her responsibility for her members. Even in the context of a specific example of management activity about which she had previously expressed dissatisfaction, namely the annual reallocation of staff to duties, she was adamant that she did not want to be a party to the process:

Researcher: But supposing S. said to you, now she won't, I know, but let's suppose she said, 'I'm going to change in two weeks time, Mary. Let's run through the list. We'll have a list of jobs and a list of people ...

Mary: Oh, no.

Researcher: ... 'You and I agree who's going where.'.

Mary: Oh, no.

Researcher: Let's supposing she did it.

Mary: That's not my job though, is it.

Researcher: Would you do it if she asked you?

Mary: No, no.

Researcher: Why not?

Mary: Well I wouldn't, would I. I mean, how can I say, 'Oh yes, we'll put so-and-so there.', when I'm there to defend my members. It's not my job to tell them where I think they should go.

She later added:

"No, because you're doing management's job then, aren't you.".

This resistance to participating in a process that she was very critical of when left entirely to management to organise was pursued further:

Researcher: But that's interesting, you see, because it goes against what most people would say about industrial democracy and participation. They say that the staff would welcome the chance to have a say in things like that.

Mary: The staff, yes, ask them all together, but not just the ...

Researcher: Would you get agreement?

Mary: (pause) I don't know.

This shop steward was similarly unhappy about the way that annual leave was allocated so again one way of improving the system was put to her:

Researcher: Why not then get the trade union representatives to agree with S. what dates people are going to have?

Mary: Oh no, can't do that.

Researcher: Why not?

Mary: Well you can't really, can you. They'd only turn back and say, 'Oh you worked it all out with management.'.

The assessment that there is an inevitable incompatibility between the function and interests of management and those of the staff was

displayed with equal clarity by other representatives:

Researcher: It's fair enough to say you've got to have the hospital to a certain standard of cleanliness, and you're right, but on the other hand you're only given a limited amount of money to do it, and that may mean that you've either got to change the standards, or the pattern of cleaning, or alter staffing levels, or whatever, and I just wondered whether you as a shop steward had any sympathy for that problem, or whether you would just say, 'No, that's management's problem to consider the budget. All I'm interested in is my members' interests and the standard of cleaning in the hospital.'?

Dilys: Well no, I can see it's very, very difficult for management to manage a budget, to put it into the budget, but there again I think my first thought would be for my girls. I mean, everybody knows that there's cutbacks, and it is difficult to manage, but I still think that my first thought would be for my girls, to get the best conditions I can for them.

Another NUPE shop steward would not even be drawn into considering how he would cope with a management problem hypothetically:

Researcher: But if that problem was yours then, what would you do?

Colin: Well it's not, it's a management problem, so I mean I .... (silence).

It was suggested that these attitudes were a reflection of the members' outlook. One comment passed was that:

> "As a representative, union representative, you realise that people are really only concerned about themselves, and how things affect them, not for the overall pattern.".

A NUPE shop steward gave the same impression:

Paul: Problems have been the same - man's problems. You'll always have a higher grade and a lower grade; you'll never get them to meet.

Researcher: Why not?

Paul: Because you wouldn't like it.

Researcher: How do you know I wouldn't like it?

Paul: To put it in other words - the working man is the biggest conservative you can have, even though he votes Labour every election time.

Researcher: In what way 'conservative'?

Paul: Conservative. He'll get every penny that he can.

The Society of Radiographers' representative indicated that another obstacle to enhanced involvement by trade unions in management might be that it would jeopardise their function of providing an independent check upon management's actions:

> "I think that perhaps it is the function of the Society or a union, that when you do, so to speak, decide on the staffing of our department I think that there ought to be a staffing done by the Society as well.".

Other representatives emphasised the degree of consensus that should exist between staff and management but observed that issues of damaging conflict would still inevitably arise. Thus, one of the NALGO representatives thought:

> "if there is trust, in lots of things you will have agreement between staff, and between trade unions and management. But in some things, on the action management have taken, then you won't, because it's a matter of interpretation.",

and he gave as an example the suspension of a member of staff that had lead to a strike amongst the porters. The need for trust was stressed by one of the ASTMS representatives:

> "So there is an inherent distrust and it's got to be got rid of. I don't think managers trust unions and I don't think they trust trade union representatives. I know a lot of unions don't trust

> managers and a lot of trade union representatives don't trust managers either. But I think that's because there's a lack of contact. There's a lack of personal relationship, in the sense that it's much more difficult to deceive somebody if you know them very well.".

He was a very idealistic advocate for how staff-management relationships could be improved but still acknowledged that conflict would not be eliminated:

> "I would take the view that if a manager and a trade union representative could sit down and talk about the problem, whatever it is, and they could be absolutely, totally truthful, and not hide anything, and abandon the usual tactical warfare-type negotiating tactics, and simply say, straight out, quite bluntly, quite honestly, what is it that the management are trying to achieve, why they want it, how they intend to get it, or would like to get it, and the trade unions responded in exactly the same way, so that everybody knew where they were and then if there is a debate about it and everybody's able to go away in agreement, fine. If they are unable to agree, well all right, it's too bad.".

However, he was still optimistic:

> "There are bound to be occasionally things where the management objective is so opposite to staff side wishes that you're going to get confrontation. I can't conceive that that would never ever happen, but it should be very rare.".

A small number of representatives wished to encourage an increased exchange of information and more consultation and decision-sharing but would still not commit themselves about whether or not they would accept any enhanced responsibility for the management of the enterprise. Again, the annual reallocation of staff to duties provided an example:

Researcher: Might there be one way of overcoming problems like that, which would be for S. again to sit down with you and the other shop stewards and say, 'Right, the time's coming up to allocate the staff. You agree it with me.'?

Dilys: That would be nice.

Researcher: But supposing then, if she'd agreed with you and the other shop stewards and the list goes out, and then you get staff saying, 'That's unfair.'?

Dilys: Well then you'd find out from that certain person the reason why she thought it was unfair, and perhaps there would be a reason that you wouldn't know about, and then you could take that to S. and she could ...

Researcher: But you've agreed it with her in the first place?

Dilys: Yes, but if she's got a reason, perhaps a different reason that what we're thinking of at the time of the move, and she can explain that to you and then to S., perhaps S. will be able to see it as well.

Researcher: So in other words, the fact that you had agreed the list yourself in the beginning still wouldn't stop you acting as a shop steward and even disagreeing with your own decision?

Dilys: Well there again, it depends on the circumstances.

Even in worker co-operatives, Eccles (1979:172) warns, shop stewards, "may revert, under stress, to a traditional form of representing the workers to 'management'.".

Shop Steward Ability

Reference has already been made to the fact that in some circumstances it is appropriate for staff and their representatives to be provided with training about how to enhance their involvement in participative systems. There was certainly evidence in Llandough that some representatives, regardless of their inclinations towards greater participation, were unlikely to be adequately able at present to contribute to more complex, detailed or formal participative

arrangements. One NUPE shop steward, for example, was quite incapable of articulating how he would improve the management of the Health Authority:

Researcher: How would you change things? How would you improve things?

Paul: Well from the Authority's point of view, H. - and I say H. because he's the tool in this particular case, it could be anyone - he's got to do as he's told, he's controlled by a committee. He may, like a clerk to a court, advise the Authority. There again, an honorary member of an authority seeing as they know nothing they've got to be guided all along the lines. They've got to be guided in such a way that they'll say, 'Yes', like a lot of sheep. They know nothing at all about the things that they're discussing. They've got to be told. They're told that if a man or a person explaining to them a particular point about - and especially a technical term - they've got to be explained. Now if (interrupted).

However, at one stage this shop steward had mentioned that he thought that budgets were inappropriately allocated and an attempt was made to examine this issue in greater detail:

Researcher: But getting back to the point, you said you'd alter the balance, so what would you spend less on?

Paul: I'd have people that understood figures for a start. You've got to pay a man, like British Leyland paid that man that amount of wages - he's no fool.

Later, the same question was repeated:

Researcher: So what would you spend less on?

Paul: Well I'd definitely cut down by management a lot.

Another NUPE shop steward was asked what she would change if she had the job of her head of department or a supervisor. She responded

with,"I think I'd find out if the staff were happy where she put them in their jobs.", and by doing so she thought, "you'd get a lot more out of them.". She was not able to say how, if she was in the supervisor's or departmental head's job, she would obtain an accurate impression of staff satisfaction and although she confirmed emphatically that she was not happy with the way things were organised at present she could not recall any single item that she would wish to change and she commented, "Your mind goes blank.".

These extracts from interviews with just two NUPE shop stewards supply only fairly superficial indications that some representatives may find it difficult to be proactive or to comprehend the full complexity of organisations, but another representative referred to the existence of such limitations more generally:

> "I've been to meetings, joint shop steward meetings, where there's no management at all, and there are times when the level of ability of shop stewards is such that in my view, both in terms of communication and in knowledge, they are at risk of disadvantaging their members, because they're not in fact competent to do the things that they are trying to do.".

The lack of adequate appropriate knowledge led to a lack of confidence in another NUPE shop steward about her ability to participate more:

Researcher: How would you want to change it to have more say in the way things are run?

Dilys: Well no, because I mean I - I couldn't say the way things are run. I don't know enough about it.

An additional source of reticence, identified by the Society of Radiographers' representative, was submission to perceptions of lack of power:

Researcher: I just wondered what you'd improve if you could in the way that decisions are made by the clinical staff. You can't see any way you can improve it?

Meryl: The point is we're not in a position to. Not at the moment - we've got no clout.

Staff Inclination

The assessment of the extent to which staff possess the desire to participate and their preferences for the ways in which they can do so have proved attractive to attempt to quantify (e.g. Wall and Lischeron 1977) but this approach is fraught with severe methodological and conceptual difficulties and the data produced is ultimately of limited applicable value. It is more worth-while to look at some of the factors that contribute towards the shaping of attitudes to participation and to examine the response of staff to the existing decision-making structures and processes concerning their workplace.

Wall and Lischeron identify that one of the causes of alterations in attitudes towards participation over time is, "the prevailing social, political and industrial climate." (p 144) but some other more specific considerations are supplied by Fox (1971) and Walker (1974). Fox cautions that inclinations towards participation can be strongly influenced by personality and orientation to work. Clearly, the benefits of participation are likely to be valued more highly and identified according to different criteria by workers with an intrinsic orientation rather than an instrumental one. And:

> "Those whose life experience and cultural values have created neither the expectation of, nor the aspiration for, self-actualization may prove remarkably resistant to this treatment, as may also those whose authoritarian personality structure disposes them to prefer a situation of dependence on, and domination by, others." (pp 11,12).

Fox also emphasises the significance of considering both the impact of broad cultural values and ideologies ("All values and attitudes

capable of being expressed in the work situation, in fact, are potential influences upon orientations to work and upon the social patterns that result." p 15) and the values of subcultures, particularly those of different working groups. The amalgam of the orientations of the subculture:

> "may be sufficiently strong in some situations to take on autonomous life of its own which makes it, in the short and perhaps medium term, independent of the nature of job design." (p 16).

Walker (1974) refers to similar influences upon inclinations to participate but in addition recognises that workers' own perceptions of their ability to participate will affect their attitudes towards it:

> "Yet another factor in the case of indirect participation may be lack of capacity for operating effectively in such bodies. .... the capacity to understand the issues involved, to use language commonly employed, and to speak persuasively is necessary in order to participate effectively in such bodies. Workers who lack this capacity (perhaps through lack of education and training) may be realistic in not taking much interest in such bodies in the belief that they could not effectively participate in them in any case." (p 23).

The evidence from the Llandough representatives was, although it did not appear to be related to perceived ability, that the hospital staff were indeed extremely apathetic about the activities of the organisation around them. One NUPE shop steward was asked if she thought that the staff were involved enough in the Area Health Authority and in her reply she included the assessment, "I don't think the staff as such would be interested really.". One of the ASTMS representatives implied that the orientation of most staff was purely instrumental:

> "Most members of staff are quite happy to just come to work and stick their good day's work in for a good day's pay, and that's all they want to do. And the rest is all hassle as far as they're concerned. They don't want to know about it.".

Another explanation for the lack of interest amongst the staff seemed to be, from the comments of one of the NALGO representatives, that

they did not appreciate the ability they possessed to achieve change:

> "Unfortunately, they don't always see the importance of the union until it's too late. And secondly, really their main interest on the whole is the wage increase. They don't always realise that there's a lot they can do to exert influence on local conditions.".

Another representative, a NUPE shop steward, assumed that the staff had so much confidence in the trade union structure that they were prepared to delegate their involvement entirely. His view was that, "they would be convinced, if the union was convinced.". The ASTMS members also appeared to delegate their involvement but would not so automatically follow the union line and this created a problem if a conflict arose, as one of the representatives described:

> "If you do a reasonable job it's easier for the bulk of people to sit back and let somebody else do it, rather than they themselves bother. The only problem with that, and it's a problem for both management and people like myself, because when things do happen both sides have to try and rapidly educate the staff generally as to what is going on, and it is very difficult to get across the finer points of the situation when they don't really know, or are not familiar with, the basic information involved.".

There was some evidence that the staff might with to contribute to enhanced participation, but it was rather meagre. The other ASTMS representative demonstrated that whilst there was some interest amongst these members about the way they were organised, it was not forceful enough to be obvious:

Researcher: Do the staff ever feel they would like some sort of say in the sort of policies of the laboratory and what work's going to be undertaken and how it's going to be done, and so on?

Bob: (silence)

Researcher: Don't you get people saying, 'What on earth have we been asked to do this for? What's he think we're doing?'?

Bob: Yes, that concept does crop up in particular. Similar sort of questions do come up.

When asked to provide an example he mentioned concern about the provision of pathology tests for private patients. A NUPE shop steward believed that the amount of information her members had was limited but that this was due to practical causes. When asked if her members knew or understood as much as she did about what was going on she replied, "No, I don't think they do, half the time." and went on to explain that it was not her fault since "the meetings", presumably trade union branch meetings, are held outside work time, "and a lot of them can't get here then, which is a shame really.".

However, only one representative, the NUPE catering shop steward, was confident that the staff would respond to a proposed new form of participation:

Researcher: If there was, say, a meeting of all the staff in the kitchen - let's say there were no management present - perhaps you held a meeting of all the staff in the kitchen, and just invited them, one, to complain, if they had any complaints, and two, to make any suggestions about how things could be improved, if they thought there were any. Do you think they'd be very forthcoming?

Carol: (Quick and emphatic) Yes, I would, yes, if it was just me, if I got them in a room on my own and asked them if they had any complaints, or anything, that they wanted brought up. Yes, I think then they would, but they wouldn't do it in front of management, and they wouldn't let me put their name to it.

It was her opinion that the staff were afraid of management and did not wish to be singled out, and yet she admitted that she knew of no

instance when staff have been subject to repercussions as a result of such activity.

Staff Ability

In his explanation of why many managers do not promote increased participation, Clarke (1980:16) suggests that:

> "Many too are probably doubtful as to the ability of workers and their representatives to improve decision-making, except perhaps in the immediate area of the work task.".

Ironically, in Llandough this was the same view that the representatives held about the workers. One NUPE shop steward stated that, "They honestly don't know their conditions of employment.". If the staff are ignorant of such basic, immediately personally relevant information, are they able or interested to learn about more complex, esoteric or diverse issues involved in general management? The same shop steward proposed that their lack of knowledge was certainly one of two factors inhibiting their involvement:

> "But there are other people who can't do that. They are frustrated with certain things that are going on, but either they are scared to voice an opinion, or they don't know how because they are ignorant of possibly the conditions of employment, or what-have-you.".

The shop stewards' belief in the timidity of the staff was reinforced several times:

Researcher: What do you think the power of a shop steward is? Why does a shop steward get things that an ordinary member of staff doesn't?

Mary: Basically, because they are afraid to go in themselves.

Another NUPE shop steward was extremely critical of the staff in her department because of their failure to voice their opinion:

> "You get them, they say, 'Oh yes, we'll come to that meeting and we'll say so-and-so and we'll say so-and-so.'. They don't say a thing.".

It was probably inevitable that this assessment would emerge because one of the fundamental purposes of shop stewards is presumably to represent staff who are unable to support themselves in dealings with management. A lack of initiative displayed by staff was often linked with a justification for the existence of shop stewards:

> "And they say, 'No, we're not entitled to a lieu night because so-and-so said we're not.'. Well I said, 'Of course you are. Go and ask first.'. And they won't. They've got to have somebody to push them. Them need somebody to go and sort of fight for them.".

There also seemed to be an anxiety that in fact the inability of staff to stand up for themselves was so extreme that it would enable them to be manipulated by management in systems of direct participation unless the stewards acted upon their behalf:

> "Not every individual, especially the working man anyway, understands a lot of what goes on so therefore they could be talked into anything and I think it needs someone like a shop steward to learn about it so that he can go in there and at least fight for what the union believes and the men want.".

It is interesting to note that this shop steward is explicit that he may have two separate objectives, although he seems to assume that they are complimentary. This was certainly not always the case. There were obviously occasions when representatives made judgements about what was best for the staff and then persuaded the staff to accept them:

> "To be honest with you, you've got to look around and see what you're dealing with, and a lot of them have got to be led.".

There also seemed to be situations in which the union had a belief around which it then had to generate the support of the staff and the risk of manipulation by the union organisation becomes apparent:

> "The ordinary man is like a sheep; you can lead him anywhere with just a few fluent words. I've done it myself, and preyed on sympathies.".

The assessment of the representatives about their members was conveyed back to them at the feedback meeting:

Researcher: Most of you gave the impression that in fact they would not be able to take part in any discussions or consultation. In a way it was predictable, I suppose, that you nearly all felt that if there was any further involvement it should be through trade unions.

Paul: Well that's obvious, isn't it.

He reiterated that trade unions exist to prevent management from exploiting individual employees. When I pointed out that this suggested that individual members of staff are not capable of looking after themselves, the same NUPE shop steward accused me of being divisive.

Proposals for Participation

Although the Llandough representatives largely displayed a lack of interest about discussing participation in general, some of them had very clear ideas about ways in which they would like to modify the existing structure and some also had very definite thoughts about which participative arrangements would not attract interest or might even be positively undesirable.

There was a call for more direct involvement by ordinary staff, but it came from just one NUPE shop steward who was responsible for only a small number of members:

> "At the moment, if things want to get altered, the supervisor will discuss it with management and then come back to the workers and say, 'We want to implement this.', and I sometimes feel the workers don't get enough say in that, even if you have the overall say in the end, and the workers give way to what's been said. Wouldn't it be better sometimes for discussions to take place in front of those workers?".

He also proposed that this involvement should be formalised:

> "The improvement that could be made is that we - I have asked, and a lot of the other boys have asked, for more regular meetings of, in our case, of our supervisors, regular discussion meetings with the working force, to discuss any underlying problems that should be brought to notice.".

Another representative warned against exactly this sort of direct participation:

> "What happens usually is that very little gets done and it's only a sort of info-session for management, who will then decide what to do. It's not much in the way of participation. It's very difficult when you have a group of workers to influence management very much at all, because they haven't got any power themselves and they just say, 'We think so-and-so ought to be done, and so-and-so.'. If the management think so, yes they'll do it, but if they don't it never gets done.".

The risk that direct participation might enable management to deliberately manipulate or exploit the staff has already been referred to as a theme amongst the representatives but this NALGO representative's criticism of direct participation emphasises other weaknesses which reveal components of his definition of genuine participation. The impression is that participation, especially consultation, is ineffective unless the staff involved have the facility to support their opinion by negotiation, and the negotiation by the potential use of sanctions.

Perversely, it was some of the NUPE shop stewards who most strongly held that participation should be through trade union representatives who also wanted the role of the supervisor to be developed, especially so that they could convey more information to the staff, could be more accessible by the staff, and could more forcefully represent the staff to management. This support for supervisors by shop stewards is inconsistent with the common view that the position attained by one group is partly at the expense of the other. The

explanation seems to be that if more information was made available to supervisors who passed it on in turn to the staff there would be greater potential for the shop stewards to negotiate; that the shop stewards would prefer to negotiate with supervisors who had increased delegation of authority rather than with management; and that, since nearly all the representatives sincerely believed that their arguments were reasonable and would be supported by the supervisors, the wishes of the staff and shop stewards would be presented with more respectability and possibly more effectiveness.

There was certainly no worry that the position of the shop stewards might be undermined, but virtually all of them pressed for more information to be made available and channelled through the trade union representative. One of the NUPE shop stewards who was also a supervisor and wished to see the position of supervisors enhanced still regarded that his function as a shop steward should take priority in any participative system. One reason was that there were practical advantages to all concerned, since he could be at work:

> "and somebody comes up and says, 'Well look, why can't we do this, why can't you do that?', you'd have an answer which you've already accepted.".

The shop steward gave the impression that his responsibilities were greater as a shop steward rather than as a supervisor:

Colin: As a shop steward, it doesn't involve the issuing out of work. It more or less involves in what work <u>is</u> issued. So, in other words, I'm only there really, in a sense, to come in on a dispute as to, as we've discussed before, as to what is the job description and so forth.

Researcher: But you were saying that it would probably be a good idea if there were meetings with the shop stewards to explain, for

example, the budgetary position, but you're saying as a shop steward, not as a supervisor?

Colin: Oh definitely. As a shop steward, not as a supervisor.

Formal regular meetings between management and all the shop stewards and staff organisation representatives were proposed by several of them as a significant means of enhancing their involvement and thereby that of the staff. However, a few who supported the idea were actually quite vague about how it might be implemented. One NUPE shop steward simply sought greater trade union/management liaison and was unable to indicate at what level this should be, about what subjects, and in what forms. Another NUPE shop steward mildly supported the idea of multi-union, regular meetings with local management but could not imagine what would be discussed:

Researcher: What's going to be on the agenda?

Bernard: I don't know. It's something new isn't it and I think what would happen is the shop stewards would be there and wait for the management to start with the questions, more than the shop stewards asking the management. That's how I think it would start off first of all.

When he was asked how such a meeting would avoid the problems that have so widely beset joint consultative committees he changed his mind and declared that a multi-union meeting would not be feasible.

But it was an innovation that attracted keen interest from a number of representatives. One NUPE shop steward saw significant value in a formal, multi-union, consultative meeting with management and when asked for suggestions for the agenda he said it would consist of "grievances of members" and believed that there were issues common

to all the unions and staff organisations. The Society of Radiographers' representative supported this type of consultation but drew attention to its existing connotation:

Researcher: It may be, for example, that most of the staff representatives say, 'It would be a good idea to have a meeting like the health and safety committee but to discuss general issues, with all the staff representatives.'.

Meryl: Yes, I would have brought that up, because that was muted. But of course these things only ever come up when you've got industrial action, that's the thing.

She mentioned that one of the benefits of regular, multi-union consultation would be to provide a forum for generating goodwill between the different staff groups. She could not be precise about what would be discussed and seemed to imagine that it would consist of something like inter-departmental problem-solving sessions. This image was shared by a NUPE shop steward, who described how inter-departmental problem-solving and harmony could be obtained by multi-union meetings with management. An ASTMS representative also saw the merit in this type of consultation. When he was asked for examples of subjects that would be discussed he gave those of a new staff recreational centre, improved staff facilities generally and new Health Authority policies.

He, too, considered that such consultation would achieve inter-departmental co-operation, but in stating this he demonstrated the unwitting naivety of all those who shared this belief. The broad assumption was that the other workgroups would only have to listen to the case of one workgroup that was dissatisfied because of an inter-departmental problem to appreciate the reasonableness of their case and concur. Just one specific problem that was current during the

research interviews illustrates that in practice this may very well not be the case and indeed that a multi-union meeting perceived to be for this purpose might compound conflicting interests with conflicting expectations. The issue in dispute was that of who should take pathology specimens from the hospital's admission room to the pathology laboratories outside normal working hours. The porters, represented by NUPE, and the pathology laboratory technicians, represented by ASTMS, each judged that it should be the other's duty. During the research interviews representatives from both unions confidently asserted that if only there was a multi-union meeting the other side would appreciate their point of view and accept responsibility for the task.

Other representatives believed that they did not possess homogeneity as a group and assessed that its absence was so marked that there would be no purpose in convening the group. A NALGO representative commented, "We've got such wide interests." and an ASTMS representative saw an even broader distinction:

Researcher: What would you think about a meeting, say, of shop stewards in this hospital? Would there be any value in that?

Eric: No, because - well it's my experience anyway - that shop stewards widely differ, more so than management.

There was virtually negligible regard for consultative procedures outside the hospital. One NUPE shop steward regarded staff representatives on the Health Authority as pointless and another NUPE shop steward believed that the decisions of the Health Authority were irrelevant since they were "too above" himself and the staff, but one of the NALGO representatives did suggest that members of the Health Authority should meet staff and management as part of the routine in

which their monthly meetings were rotated around the hospitals.

Another lone supporter was a NUPE shop steward who advocated a degree of workers' control, and did so with great enthusiasm:

Paul: It all boils down to a workers' committee, and management, in administering discipline. Men will take it from us whereas they take umbrage if you said the same things as we did. We could manage our members to a point - before you ever went into a meeting he's already been told, by us, and given a ticking off if it's needed, 'Now, you're on your own, we can only ask for so-and-so.'. You know what you can ask for - leniency, or a few days' suspension, or stop bonus, anything like that. But he's already told that before you go in. Now, he'd accept it better if there was a workers' committee before it ever came to management.

Researcher: What do you mean, 'a workers' committee'?

Paul: Tried by his peers. Tried by people doing exactly the same job as himself, who can see if he is shamming, or know that he is shamming, whereas we've got to stick up for our members, knowing full well that the person we're representing has been doing exactly what you've been saying.

This was a radical proposal that attracted fundamental questions about the nature of the employing relationship and the role of trade unions but the shop steward could not be drawn into facing up to these. The reaction of staff disciplined by a workers' committee was probed:

Researcher: Supposing they don't follow the procedure. Now you've got a member of staff who's been disciplined - let's say they've been sacked - by a workers' committee ...

Paul: Yes. They'd accept it.

He was particularly attracted by the power the workers' committee could exercise to ensure that all sick leave was genuine:

Researcher: Aren't you being more extreme perhaps than management in looking at people like that?

Paul: No, I don't think so, because you also owe an obligation and a duty to the members that are working, and if you think that you've got a slacker, you've got other members apart from the one that's sick that you're going to defend, as you say. You've got twenty or thirty others that are working constantly, and are having to work themselves into the ground to cover people if they're on the sick. Genuine sickness, yes, you know the individual. This is where a workers' committee - we know them, because we live with them, we work with them, have social and recreation with them. You know them, and through knowing them - you know the type of individual, if he's a genuine person.

The involvement of trade unions in disciplinary affairs, particularly in monitoring sickness levels, is not unknown but unfortunately this shop steward left completely unanswered the questions about crucial issues such as how the union would reconcile the conflicting interests of its members, whether it would accept the criteria that not only management but independent bodies require to be considered when undertaking activities such as disciplining, and to what extent the trade union would share with management the responsibility and accountability for the actions taken.

The research data has already shown that the nature of the management function and the way in which it is exercised have a substantial bearing upon perceptions of involvement, and some attempt was made to discover whether the representatives had ideas about whether there should be any alterations in the management structure. Despite the data reported in Chapter Five the representatives largely

not only accepted the existing arrangements but also actually positively supported them. One of the ASTMS representatives found the existing management structure satisfactory, was content to accept a medical consultant as his head of department, regarded the hospital as the most important decision-making level and identified with the hospital rather than with the pathology laboratories throughout the Health Authority. Other representatives were not so convinced that it was desirable to have medical staff as heads of departments, but with this exception agreed with the ASTMS representative's sentiments. It was even suggested to a NUPE shop steward that perhaps management in Llandough was too autocratic and his response was, "With everybody working together you get a better service.". He would have liked to have seen managerial power exclusively in the hands of the hospital administrator and no involvement from managers at higher levels. The Society of Radiographers' representative felt that it was right that the hospital administrators were involved in the management of her department, although this is a sensitive issue in other X-ray departments in other hospitals, which was a difference she recognised:

Researcher: Are you happy with the way that you can actually have a say in things?

Meryl: I think in the department, yes, definitely. But that depends to a great deal, having trained in another hospital, on the managers of the department.

Only one representative, the other ASTMS steward, expressed serious dissent about the adequacy of the existing management structure. One of his concerns was that it was even impossible to describe what the structure was:

> "I remember - it's still going on, sort of - we had a difficulty about moving specimens at night, on call. The number of different people who could say that they were the managers who ought to be sorting that out is almost endless.... We can't sort it out in this hospital because to make agreements with you is not possible, because other people say that they are the managers, like the pathologists.".

Taken to its extreme, confusion such as this raises the daunting difficulty of how to discuss staff participation when it is not possible to identify who staff might participate with. However, a specific problem was raised as an example with the representative and he was able to make his preference clear:

> "From my point of view, I would say that the obvious person who, from the management side, who should be dealing with that sort of issue, is yourself. But it's not so. We have to deal with the pathologists; we have to deal with their representative bodies, like the Section of Haematology and then the Division of Pathology; we have to deal with Personnel; we have to deal with the MLSO management structure; and so on, and so on, and so on.

More generally, his attitude to the management structure was identical to that of the other representatives:

> "As far as Area level is concerned, there is very little that can be done, because it's far too far removed from what's actually happening. Most trade union activity is at the workplace level. By far the most. So consequently that's where trade union/ management relationships ought to be concentrated.".

This was his recommendation not just for logistical ease but also because it could enhance industrial relations:

> "It would be much better for the management at Area level, on their own, to decide the sort of policy they want, if you must have an Area level, pass that down to the workplace level, the Unit level, and then leave it to the Unit manager to try to put that policy into operation with the staff in that Unit. People have loyalty to a Unit. They don't have loyalty to an Area. They will do things - they have loyalty to a trade union, they have loyalty to specific managers. You can <u>use</u> that at local level.".

Conclusion

It is accepted by Chamberlain (1967) that the very existence of trade unions generates participation and that attention should therefore be given to how to accommodate their concerns:

> "If boundaries of subject matter cannot be set to confine union activity, and if unions are to be allowed to continue their vital existence, there remains only the possibility of a functional integration of the union within the business enterprise. .... This does not mean that competing interests will not arise within the corporation. It does mean that organisational procedures must be provided to resolve differences which threaten the integrity of the business unit." (p 195).

Unfortunately, the procedures he suggests are essentially formal and idealistic. They rely upon certain absolute standards of behaviour by all the parties involved and acceptance by the trade unions of the management-defined broad organisational constraints. The data in this chapter about attitudes to participation does not indicate that such crisp criteria can be applied in the analysis of workplace industrial relations.

However, the data does suggest that the propositions propounded by Walker (1970:451-5) are more realistic, albeit more indeterminate. He emphasises that different forms of participation may perform different functions; different forms are mutually interactive; success depends upon subjects being important to staff and capable of their influence; management/worker communication is not automatically improved; expectations and performance can seriously diverge; self-actualisation is not necessarily enhanced; the effects upon efficiency may be indeterminate; and the power effects are complex and may be difficult to establish.

Finally, elsewhere (1974:30) Walker has predicted:

"It seems likely that workers' participation in management will continue to extend in three forms:
(a) Collective bargaining;
(b) Integrative participative institutions (e.g. works councils, workers' representatives on the board, etc.);
(c) Descending participation through more meaningful job design and modified work organisation.".

Of these three main categories clearly the only one that held any real significance for the Llandough representatives was the first.

Chapter Nine

PROGRESS

It may be assertive anecdote but is it analysis? In page one of this thesis it was contended that little of value could be discovered about participation without simultaneous regard for the other features of industrial relations character and activity and that, reciprocally, pursuit of the empirical research into participation inevitably revealed more about the nature of the components of industrial relations behaviour and their interrelation and interaction. This chapter will seek to support that contention.

The Llandough Data

The data derived from the interviews and events at Llandough Hospital contains not merely an accumulation of anecdotes but also readily identifiable themes about the nature of the employing relationship and the place of participation in it. Most fundamentally, the hospital contained active trade union representatives who had demonstrated, and went on to demonstrate, a willingness to use sanctions, including strike action, to support their claims about local and national issues but yet had no design at all upon altering the nature of the employing relationship and at times they even reaffirmed a managerial right to control the enterprise. This went to the extent of expressing the desire for stronger local management and implying that the management hierarchy, which they accepted the local management was subject to, was virtually unassailable. The manner in which the management function was exercised was predictably

important to the staff but more unexpectedly there were strong indications that the authority of managers who are willing to negotiate and compromise was actually enhanced by doing so. There were occasions when management very obviously did not do this and acted as if the issues involved justified the use of managerial prerogative, and the staff demonstrated that these as if prerogatives had real power. Nevertheless, there were aspects of the organisation in which the staff and their representatives exercised equally unilateral control, but informally.

The representatives had a well-developed, almost instinctive sense of those issues about which management should be sensitive to the attitudes and opinions of the staff as expressed by the representatives. They felt entitled to exercise influence over these issues and ultimately to negotiate them with management and obtain an agreed solution. Concepts of forms of participation were little understood by the representatives and the prime consequence of any new participative arrangements would be to enhance the opportunities for negotiation. Participation would therefore largely reflect the existing industrial relations processes but also affect their emphasis, although participation was far from one of the major influences upon the nature of industrial relations. Indeed, one of the most complex features revealed by the data was the inconsistency and dynamism of the industrial relations processes. They altered significantly and quickly over time and within them responses varied in accordance with a wide variety of factors, such as issues, personality and precedence.

Secondary Research Data

The bulk of the data in the thesis has been generated in Llandough Hospital but cognizance has also been taken of other academic research and commentaries on activity in other enterprises. The simple comparison of the original and secondary data reveals considerable differences. In the latter, one is made frequently aware of enterprises in which staff and trade union control over the organisation of the enterprise has permeated almost all of what would otherwise be regarded as the management function. In a number of enterprises management has manifested its concern that the range of trade union control has extended to the point where the minimal powers are threatened that management considers it must retain in order for the continued existence of the enterprise to be justified. In most enterprises this is the ultimate power, and sanction, of management. The issues over which management must minimally maintain control if it is to sustain the enterprise vary between organisations but may be drawn from examples such as working practices, number of staff employed, and industrial relations. In defending these controls management does not exercise as if prerogatives but real prerogatives and there can be no scope for negotiation and compromise.

That this message, apparently with earnestness, has been proclaimed in at least some of the largest national enterprises and has been unheeded in other enterprises that have since closed must demonstrate the degree to which trade unions can gain control in management functions. While most such situations are of historical or pragmatic origin they can also be derived from overtly political onslaughts against managerial control. Whatever the origin may be, for enterprises

in which staff/trade union power threatens real managerial prerogatives, a unitary analysis, or analyses suggesting the suspension of judgements about the employing relationship, are unrealistic. A pluralistic analysis must prevail and is accurate. Such situations also provide a justification for the conclusion of Flanders (1970) and others that management can only retain control by sharing it, through collective bargaining. Participation may assist in this purpose and may also serve to camouflage loss of managerial control and provide a means of further enhancing trade union power.

The converse relativities apply now in some of those national enterprises where management has sought to defend its real prerogatives and exercised initiative in reversing the trade union advances in the achievement of unilateral or negotiated control. In these circumstances, where management has been successful there will still be some element of informal control but probably much reduced as a result of the stricter supervision that usually accompanies this strategy. There will be a residual but greatly diminished mutually recognised arena for collective bargaining but if management is genuine, or perceived to be genuine, about its will to close the enterprise if trade union power once again seeks to extend beyond the tolerated arena, everything else will be under management's control, subject to the exercise of real prerogatives. If the negotiating relationship is of this kind it may be valid to apply a unitary framework, with staff and trade unions co-operating with management in order to ensure the continued viability of the enterprise.

An Analytic Framework

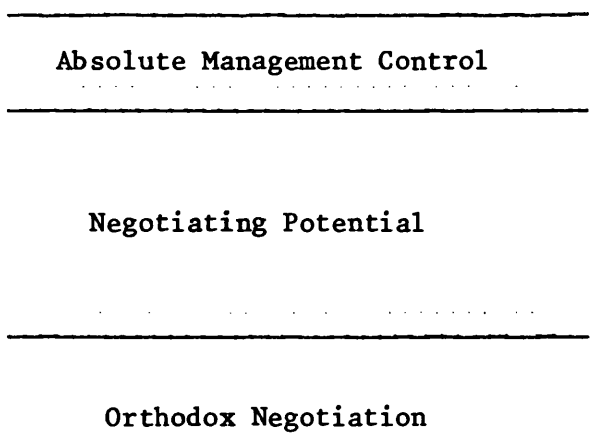
Although the employing relationships evident in the secondary data may demonstrate two extremes, the disparity with the relationship perceived in Llandough Hospital is considerable and it has already been suggested that different elements of some of the orthodox alternative theories of industrial relations behaviour will be appropriate in different types of employing relationships. The research in Llandough showed that distinctions between participation and negotiation or consultation and negotiation were at least in some part unreal, unless countered by the employer's negotiating strength. The pattern of collective bargaining is clearly one of the most fundamental influences upon the nature of the employing relationship but whether one is looking at the object or the image in the mirror is not clear because so too is negotiating behaviour a manifestation of the employing relationship. Consequently, it is difficult to imagine how one can assess the potential for participation without first assessing the nature of the employing relationship and in particular the role of negotiation in it. If this is true, an 'It all depends' conclusion appears inexorable: it is impossible to generalise about the nature of the employing relationship and therefore one can only analyse each local situation and within those unique parameters obtain a unique derivation of participatary potential.

Such pessimism is unfounded. It is proposed that within the Llandough data there is an analytical structure that not only combines a method of describing the employing relationship with a means of analysing it but also contains the germination of ideas about how new participative arrangements may develop in different circumstances.

The structure is the progeny of the natural fusion between the original and secondary research data. It provides a means of postulating the relationships between control, negotiation, participation, the exercise of both real and as if prerogatives and the dynamism between them and acting upon them. However, a hasty proviso should be made that the analysis is termed a 'structure' only because in its most simplistic form it is capable of diagramatic representation. It is certainly not to suggest any degree of formality, rigidity or even clarity about the employing relationship. It should not be compared to the beautifully layered coloured sands of the Isle of Wight but to the mucky gradation of the composition of woodland soil.

The structure of influence in the employing relationship has the following, largely self-explanatory components:

Diagram Four

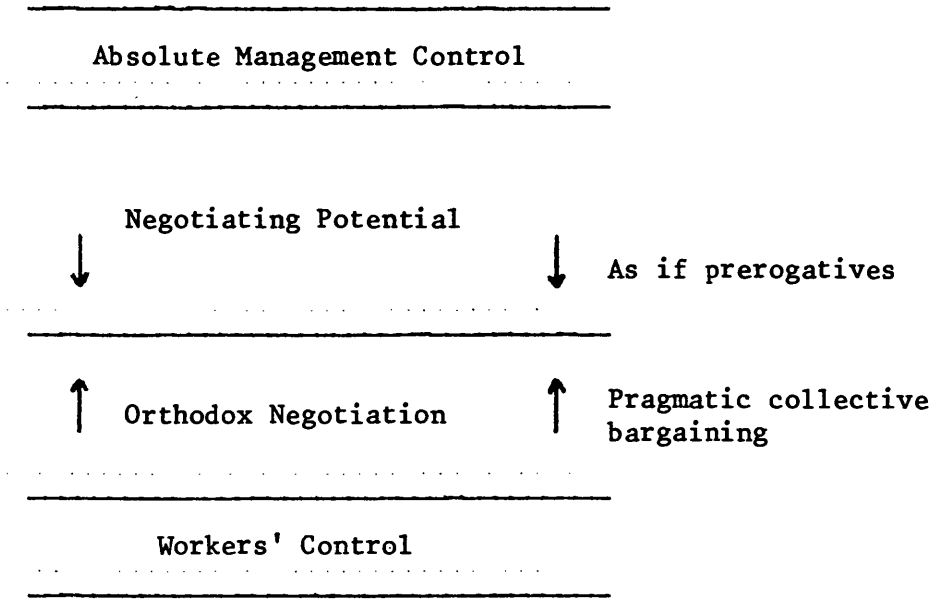


Components of Influence in the Employing Relationship

Absolute management control refers to management's ultimately unilateral ability to decide whether the enterprise should continue or be

terminated. The amount of absolute management control required will not be restricted solely to this decision but will relate to any other issues which if management lost control of it would have to consider the ultimate decision. These areas over which management wishes to retain absolute control might never be challenged but if they are it will lead to management using real prerogatives, on the basis that its wishes must be obeyed or the enterprise will be closed. Beyond this core of absolute management control is the area subject to the greatest fluctuation. This is because it represents the control that management would like to possess, and will defend, but which it may concede it has to share with the staff if the balance of negotiation is against it. One means by which management may retain control over this negotiating potential is by using as if prerogatives i.e. acting as if the area is inevitably and ultimately totally under its control when in fact if this is seriously pragmatically disadvantageous it may capitulate to share control. If this occurs it increases the cope of orthodox negotiation, which is the area in which management may not like to relinquish total control but passively or even formally does so because of the staff's bargaining strength and/or because of a moral inclination to encourage expression and achievement of staff wishes. Finally, there is almost inevitably an area in which staff exercise their own absolute control. This will very largely be informal, although not necessarily unknown to management, but can also formally exist. The focus of the main internal forces of dynamism is readily identifiable:

Diagram Five



Some of the Internal Dynamism in the Employing Relationship

Where the two meet delineates the existing limit of management control, which will at least match that of the limit of the negotiating potential but is more likely to run through the stratum of orthodox negotiation.

Such a representation obviously has grave limitations. It is just one structure describing degrees of influence in the employing relationship but it may be applied to widely different features of the enterprise. The framework may relate to just one issue or activity with different aspects of it falling into different strata, for example. Alternatively, each stratum may represent a collection of entire issues or activities. Or the framework may represent a summary of influence and control in the enterprise as a whole, and so on. Neither is there necessarily agreement about the location of the limits of the different strata. They are subjectively defined and represent perceptions which may be explicit but which are usually implicit. They may even be unknown to any of the parties in the industrial relations processes

and only when tested may it become apparent that they conflict. And although the framework incorporates the most important forces creating internal dynamism the absence of representation of external agents of change is not an inadequacy of the framework or a dismissal of their significance. They are accommodated in the way in which the proportions of the different strata will vary over time.

Finally, it needs to be reiterated that there are no clear lines between the strata. The ignorance of their existence and the potential or actual conflict of definition already referred to would alone make such clarity of differentiation unrealistic. But more fundamentally it is patently absurd to imagine that industrial relations activity can be divided into absolute categories of influence and control. The analogy of stratification is derived from the study of a sample of top soil, particularly when it is allowed to settle in a jar of water, but more poetically perhaps a structure containing both gradation and strata can be compared to that of a rainbow.

Characteristics of the Employing Relationship

The nebulous nature of these provisos and their association with a simple and structured diagram may seem incongruous and of only very restricted illustrative or analytic value but it is actually rather fertile. The proviso acknowledge the real world. Decisions, for example, are often not made in a rational, deliberated manner, especially at operational levels where time constraints are much tighter. Managers may also be unable to predict, or inaccurately predict, the results of their decisions so consequently they may be surprised at the strength of staff response to even the simplest of

communications, such as memos and off the cuff comments. An element of haphazardness may be present. Walton (1981:14) observes that:

> "Few of us are immune from encountering managerial situations where - being honest - we don't really know what to do. .... we may decide to 'carry on regardless', and fall back on luck.".

Such hit and miss conduct of affairs applies not only to management or to just the participants in industrial relations, but to all social interaction. Hyman (1977:106) summarises that:

> "human beings possess goals, define situations, assign meanings to the actions of others, develop expectations, frame intentions, and act in accordance with their interpretations of the choices open to them."

and then warns that:

> "Men's actions do not always have the intended result, and often the unintended consequences of human activity are patterned by unrecognised structural determinants. Meanings and motives are themselves typically socially generated and sustained, in ways of which the actors themselves may be unaware.".

He continues by describing a complexity of social reality that acknowledges, amongst others, the place of the irrational, the inaccurate, the rational according to criteria that are not recognised as rational by others, and the spontaneous.

The research framework accommodates this confusing reality and in doing so provides insight into it. It reveals some of the "unrecognised structural determinants" that govern both initiative and the responses to it. The significance of assessing and interpreting the subjective meanings the parties in industrial relations put to their actions is rarely given sufficient prominence in industrial relations analysis, but this fault should not be rectified at the expense of structural analysis; the two are complimentary. The subjectivity of individuals is shaped by implicit frames of reference and the proposed

research framework provides an aid to their identification. And although the analytic tool is largely structural it does not mean that it is also exclusively formal. The inevitability, extent and value of informality and informal control in industrial relations have been emphasised elsewhere (Terry 1977; also Batstone et al 1977:264) and the framework specifies informal control as one of the strata and incorporates informality in the description of the processes active when the strata are being tested or displaying dynamism.

The facility to convey movement in industrial relations relationships, influence and control is one of the central purposes of the analytic framework. At its most general, for instance, it is neither exclusively pluralistic or unitaristic, although it can be either. It tends to imply, however, that there are elements of both present in all aspects of industrial relations. One of the chief features of a participatory enterprise, as described by Walker (1977:1), is that it is, "A coalition of conflicting and co-operative interests.". Bate and Mangham (1981) believe that these characteristics exist in any organisation, which consequently, "may be depicted as cohering on the basis of 'antagonistic co-operation'." (p 172). The potential volatility of any organisation can therefore be well understood:

> "We believe that organisations are essentially political arenas wherein individuals and groups struggle to have what they consider right and proper prevail. In some circumstances, perhaps even many, interests overlap and perceptions of that which is right and proper coincide; thus co-operation is possible and desirable. In other circumstances, interests do not overlap and perceptions do not coincide; thus antagonism is possible and inevitable. Behaviour in organisations - from either perspective - may be seen as a matter of tolerance *and* tension, conflict *and* co-operation, integration *and* division." (p 175).

The analytic framework provides expression for both co-operation and conflict of interest and it is the process of establishing at the workplace which applies in any specific context that generates some of the substantial dynamism in employing relationships, although many other influences militate against stability. The representation of this dynamism by the analytic framework may appear sound but uncontroversial but it was an aspect of industrial relations behaviour that was neglected for some time. Somers (1969:41, quoted in Bain and Clegg 1974:107) complained that:

> "industrial relations research needs a longer time dimension, a dynamic theory. Too often, studies in this field have been of a static, cross-sectional variety, even in problem areas characterised by rapid change. This consideration is especially pertinent in relating environmental forces to internal plant relations and worker behaviour. Both the environment and the internal relationships are in constant flux, and analyses based on a point in time are likely to provide only limited or misleading results.".

That such outcomes could occur was demonstrated by Batsone et al in one of the very few studies over time of the organisation of trade unions. They concluded that there had been continual and considerable changes in the nature of the trade union organisations and consequently did not concur with the then current understandings of organisational development:

> "This perspective contrasts with the one implicit in a thesis of organisational maturity. For such a developmental theory assumes either stability or predictable and steady change within the context on which the domestic organization is located." (1977:230).

The research by Bate and Mangham into participation shows that this was another area of study that had suffered from inadequate consideration of organisational movement:

> "The cross-sectional nature of most research has obviously had the effect of ignoring the question of whether attitudes to participation change over time: in the overwhelming majority of cases, a

> 'snapshot' had been taken of employee attitudes in one or more companies, followed by processing and rapid display of the picture. Perhaps a longitudinal view of the same subject, particularly over a period of time when the extent of participation was being increased, would reveal - as in our case - great changes." (1981:202).

The relationship between participation and the analytic framework will be considered later but its potential dynamism is encapsulated in the potential dynamism of the whole structure. In other words, the analytic framework meets the requirement of Strauss that:

> "rather than seeing a relatively inflexible structure with a limited and determinable list of structural properties, we have to conceive of a ward, hospital, or any other institution as a structure in process." (1978:258).

He continues:

> "the point that most requires underlining is that structural process has consequences that themselves enter into the emergence of a *new* structural process."

and a crucial feature of the analytic framework is that it does not just accommodate dynamism of any type but in fact focusses on what might almost be called the ordering of dynamism and the shifting structures it creates.

The strata of the analytic framework are defined by the parties involved and an important element of the source of their definition will be the definitions of others and since these are not merely academic distinctions but summaries of perceptions concerning the disposition of self-interest, the process of accommodating the various definitions must be one of negotiation. One of the innovations of the analytic structure is that it encompasses both the negotiation of the order of control and influence and the negotiation of specific industrial relations issues and activities. It is suggested that there may be considerable areas of control that management may tolerate

(p 73), "the degree of obduracy to be contended with" (p 73), "the conviction of adamancy" (p 73), "Strength and vigor in a party and a ring of conviction about its presentation" (p 74) and, "an impression of intractability" (p 74). She illustrates very convincingly the contention that there can be no absolute limits about what is negotiable:

> "In the peculiar pattern of communications which obtains in bargaining, what is *done* is vastly more revealing than what is said. Any public show of change from one position to another becomes a source of cues to the opposing side about what it can rightfully expect and hopfully push for. Thus, if a management team does have real, solid outer limits beyond which it cannot (or fervently hope not to have to) go, it will need to stay at some distance from these, in order to get across to the other side what is the vicinity of that precise point. Should it make the grave error of stating explicitly what its limits are, it would be stating instead, in the language of bargaining, 'We offer this now, and you may legitimately figure that there is more to be had where this came from.'." (p 78,79).

Walker (1977:2,3) confirms that in practice even when limits have been declared it has been possible to breach them:

> "It cannot be denied that in the absence of collective bargaining management would make decisions unilaterally. Each widening of the range of issues subject to collective bargaining has been contested by management as invasion of managerial functions, and the historical trend has clearly been toward greater and greater penetration of areas of decision which should otherwise be taken unilaterally by management.".

Mangham suggests that:

> "Change is nearly always confronted by strong forces holding it in check and sharply circumscribing the potential rewriting of the situational scripts." (1978:78)

but in the context of a negotiated order there is another alternative, which is that the change may be accommodated if the change itself or the process of accepting it enables other parties to strengthen their own situational scripts. In fact Mangham himself and Bate have reported how in a practical context the subjects of change were able to almost reverse the advantages in the situational scripts:

> "Some of the representatives, in adopting a persistent, questioning but no less 'responsible' behaviour, effectively forced the managers to respond. They refused to be 'put off' by management's expressions of good intent, they were not deflected by the presentations of various managers which implied that 'they, the representatives' should defer. Some have gradually built identities that are resistant to the flattery and vague threat. Their 'situated identities' as representatives have radically effected initial notions of participation and involvement. As they have elaborated their situated identities, so the management has seen the need to change its identity within the group." (1981:181).

In highlighting the exploitation of opportunities to enhance self-interest in the face of the postulation of abstract concepts of rights, Flanders (1967) appears to have injected some realism into industrial relations study. He describes the combination of maintaining notional managerial prerogatives while yielding to bargaining power on the shop floor as, "the most fundamental cause of the weakening of managerial control and the growing anarchy in workplace relations" (p 32) and his solution is to combine the two unilateral systems of control into one of joint control achieved by compromise. But some reservations need to be expressed. It is unclear whether the establishment of joint control will itself eliminate serious conflict or whether it will only formalise the nature and scope of negotiation. The latter is more likely and, as Douglas (1957) has identified, attempts to formalise the parameters of negotiation may only encourage them to be tested and further extended. Secondly, managerial prerogatives, both real and notional, do exist and can impact so forcefully upon the employing relationship as to become one of the main determinants of its character.

The fundamental distinction is that Flanders' thesis assumes that all employing enterprises exhibit a pluralist structure whereas, as the Llandough research shows, this is not necessarily the case. The analytic

structure explains how both pluralist and unitary frames of reference may be valid in different circumstances and even how elements of both may exist at the same time. The dominant ideology is usually the management ideology and if this prevails the negotiating potential in the analytic framework will remain large and probably mainly unseen by the staff and their local representatives. If management is unable to sustain its ideology the negotiating potential will be largely or entirely absorbed within orthodox negotiation and there will be an expanded stratum of informal staff control. In these circumstances the employing relationship is one of pluralism and Flanders is right to declare the futility of management that expects staff to conform to the exercise of its prerogatives simply because it declares that they exist.

In the first situation, however, a unitary frame is more appropriate, without denying that there may be significant areas of conflict. This paradox has permeated the Llandough data and is described precisely by Armstrong et al (1981:17,18). The law and formal collective bargaining agreements are very inadequate for allocating control at the workplace and consequently:

> "control rests upon the efficacy of other means. Of these, perhaps the most important is *the general acceptance by workers of 'management's right to manage' which, however, is not incompatible with the resistance to specific usages of that right.* The claim of legitimacy of managerial authority is general, whereas acts of authority are specific.".

Similar distinctions have been made between systems of that order that are industrial and normative and concrete, interpersonal interpretation (Cousins 1972), and between dominant value systems and subordinate value systems (Parkin 1972). But at the time of the field research the two elements of the paradox seemed irreconcilable. Despite their apparently firm conviction that the authority used to exercise the

management function was right and should be upheld, the Llandough representatives' equal regard for expressing concern and conflict about specific issues if necessary seemed quickly destined to throw the employing relationship into anarchy. If, as many of them confirmed, there was nothing that they would not challenge if they felt strongly enough about it it seemed despondently predictable that management, and the enterprise, would rapidly stagnate because of the failure to achieve change and movement. This fear is now assuaged, since it has become obvious that the representatives' affiliation to the existing employing relationship is sincere and is in fact sustained in a variety of ways.

To begin with, there is enormous internalisation of the management ethos amongst the staff, to the extent that the exercise of the management function becomes so inevitable and natural that its validity is only very rarely questioned. One of the outcomes of the research by Armstrong et al (1981) was the confirmation of workers' acquiescence in management's rule-making. One of their conclusions is that:

> "The point is that major elements of managerial ideology are broadly accepted by most workers and their representatives and consequently many of the latter assume 'helper' functions" (p 82).

This implicit acquiescence was also conveyed forceably by the Llandough data - no-one had any designs upon the authority structure. Indeed, another feature sustaining the management ideology amongst the staff that is found in both the Llandough and Armstrong et al research is that, much more explicitly, the staff set limits on what is acceptable by way of challenge to management. Armstrong et al provide examples of a staff representative clearly reaffirming managerial prerogative to a member of staff and of another representative who displayed anxiety to disclaim decision-making ambitions. Identical deference

to management and self-imposed restrictions upon the challenge to its authority were obvious from the Llandough representatives and it is interesting to note that in both research contexts representatives criticised other unions for going too far.

Hyman (1977:122-125) summarises an attractive argument that even the nature of collective bargaining is distorted in order to conform with the management ideology. There may be discontent about the nature of the employing relationship but since collective bargaining and industrial action can only be stimulated by issues about which it is appropriate to be aggrieved they therefore may be about issues not stated to be their cause and the agreements reached are unlikely to resolve the original problems. This demonstrates the force of the dominant ideology:

> "Since managerial control is legitimised in our culture, it is not surprising that acceptance of a wide area of managerial prerogative is one of the foundations of collective bargaining. Workers, too, cannot formulate explicitly those grievances which stem from the exercise of managerial control without questioning their very subjection to this control. The basic necessity that every strike must be settled means, moreover, that workers are obliged to specity their grievance in a form which permits resolution *in negotiation with employers*. Where workers' deprivations derive from their very status as employees, the requirements of the strike situation prevent this grievance from receiving articulation. Collective bargaining is the art of the possible - within a narrowly-defined framework of possibilities." (p 124).

Chamberlain (1967) is conscious of this tension but unlike Hyman acticipates that its containment is only temporary:

> "There is thus no desire to challenge managerial authority *as such*, but a firm insistence that where the interests of the workers are bound up in the exercise of authority in a given area of business operations, the unions must be granted a voice. .... It is at this point, however, that the paradox is reintroduced. For there is a growing consciousness on the part of the increasing number of labor leaders that there is scarcely an area of business

> operations in which managerial decisions do not affect these interests of the workers." (p 145).

He continues:

> "It is perhaps fair to say that with few exceptions the union leaders have not fully thought through the implications of their stated position. It is a safe prediction that as the issues are formed more concretely they would be led irresistibly to the conviction that the preservation of management's undivided authority and responsibility is incompatible with the logic of their objectives." (p 145,146).

In fact, not only is Chamberlain underestimating the intensity of the internalisation of the management ethos and the desire to avoid perceived extremes of staff opposition, he is also ignoring the means by which management may be able to retain or regain its total control of the negotiating potential.

The methods are so numerous, interrelated and detailed that they will not be elaborated upon here. A few examples will suffice to defend the contention that they exist. Writing as the Chairman of British Rail, Sir Peter Parker implied the use of propaganda and cultural manipulation:

> "The social dimension to successful enterprise is ignored at our peril.
> I looked to personnel management to help managers - and unions - to understand the interdependence of the different cultures of enterprise and of the community;" (1983:17).

Hyman (1975:109) emphasises manipulation of a different sort:

> "The policy of rewarding 'reasonable' stewards (and their memebers) and punishing 'militants' is pursued, with greater or lesser sophistication, by many managements; and it clearly subjects those affected to intense pressure to conform to accommodate relationships. This is increasingly true the more the steward's preoccupations centre around the routine problems and day-to-day issues of industrial relations; for it is in this context that the *personal* relationship between management and union representatives can exert a major influence on the outcome of negotiations.".

At Inmos, the formerly state-owned microchip company, a highly proactive and rational approach to the inception of formalised industrial relations

meant that manipulation far exceeded that which is normally possible with shop stewards on a day-to-day basis. In devising an employee relations policy for its new plant in South Wales four major priorities were identified and implemented. This included an awareness from the outset that:

> "union involvement was almost inevitable. So, rather than to face the prospect of haphazard and potentially damaging multi-union development, it was decided to seek recognition of a single union to represent office, technician and operative staff."

and the company then virtually interviewed five different unions who had expressed an interest in gaining recognition at the new plant:

> "In the end Inmos chose the EETPU, in part because its general approach to industrial relations corresponded most closely with that of the company." (Industrial Relations Review and Report 299, 12.7.83.).

Another mechanism that some commentators have purported serves to enhance management control is participation itself, which is an argument that will be returned to. Ramsay (1976b:696), for example, believes that:

> "When employees are offered a say in return for adopting a 'responsible' attitude, they are likely to discover that 'responsible' means safeguarding profits at the workers' expense. The decisions are made by the preconditioned frame of reference, not by the workers.".

Lastly, sight should not be lost of the aspect of management that seem to most consciously affect the attitudes of the Llandough representatives towards it, and this was the style used in exercising its function. They valued highly and seemed to have more respect for managers who were sensitive to the sentiments of their staff and this seemed to substantially ameliorate what could otherwise be the most antagonistic features of the structure of control and influence. This is a reiteration of the paradox that by giving the impression of relinquishing some of its absolute control to joint control with staff

management in essence consolidates its control. But this will only be true if the management function being exercised is one perceived by the staff to be of some substance i.e. a management style that is sensitive to the staff because management itself is weak or laissez faire may be held in little regard by the staff because even real concessions, let alone superficial ones, will be of little worth. In other words, and this was the other key characteristic of management style identified by the Llandough representatives, management needs significant control over negotiating potential if its style is to be regarded as important and this in turn means that it must act as if the entire negotiating potential is under its control. And numerous examples have been provided in the Llandough context of such prerogatives being exercised and being accepted as legitimate by the staff. In Blumer's words (1965:538):

> "Established patterns of group life exist and persist only through the continued use of the same schemes of interpretation; and such schemes of interpretation are maintained only through their continued confirmation by the defining acts of others.".

Perhaps rather tortously, the attainment of this understanding can satisfy one of the sources of enquiry described in Chapter One. Feelings of confusion, inadequacy and class alienation were being generated because what was being defined as reasonable appeared inexplicably unreasonable to the staff, who persisted in demanding that furniture be removed on overtime, for example, even where spare time was available during normal working hours, and strained industrial relations and actual industrial action were the consequences. What becomes obvious is that 'reasonableness' is either irrelevant in industrial relations or can only be defined in terms of negotiation. It is futile for a relatively new manager to decide that moving

furniture only on overtime is unreasonable. What is required is an assessment of where that activity falls in the analytic structure of influence and control. By seeking to move furniture during normal working hours an attempt was being made to relocate the activity from the orthodox negotiation stratum into the negotiating potential stratum, subject to a managerial as if prerogative. It was being asserted that the allocation of overtime was an absolute function of management and not one to be shared with staff. As far as the staff were concerned, previous managements had permitted the arrangement to continue for some years and consequently to them if was a reasonable one.

To conclude this elaboration of the value and accuracy of the analytic framework it is interesting to note just how tellingly it describes the actual confusion and potential resourcefulness of supervisory staff, which is an issue that emerged from the Llandough data and has been examined in other research and by other commentators (e.g. Fewtrell 1982, Child and Partridge 1982). While supervisors will possess their own definitions of the strata and these may vary from those of the other parties involved, their awareness of the definitions of others will fall between, and commonly at, two extremes. At one they will be floundering in a mire of conflicting, perplexing, undiscernable definitions, probably seeking support from staff or their representatives, because they appear confident about where the limits lie, rather than management, for fear that it may proclaim inadequacy. At the other extreme, supervisors can be those participants in industrial relations at operational level who have the most keenly developed command of the web of definitions and depending upon which affiliation is most encouraged this depth of knowledge and sensitivity

may be used by either staff and their representatives or by management. The analytic structure thus explains why in Llandough some supervisors were regarded as irrelevant, while some were reported to turn to shop stewards for help and advice, and why some shop stewards wished that the supervisors had more authority.

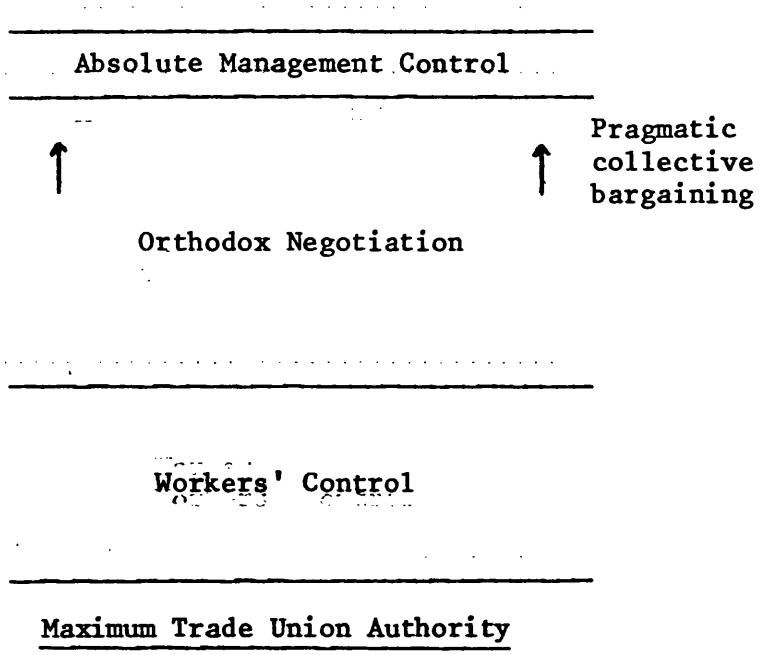
The Analytic Framework Applied

Before proceeding to consider how one specific feature of the employing relationship, namely participation, relates to the whole it may be helpful to restate the value of the proposed analytic framework by using examples. National industries with high and controversial public profiles have been chosen as the first two of three examples because their more extreme nature makes their analysis easier but it must be declared that there is awareness that these examples are also simplistic. There has been no attempt to actively research the enterprises concerned and there will undoubtedly be large elements of subjectivity and bias in the media sources utilised for background information purposes, but the value of the analytic structure is unaltered.

For many years until the beginning of this decade, in a number of enterprises, such as British Rail, the National Coal Board, British Steel, printing and car manufacture, it was well recognised that trade unions had prominent authority in the management function. This partly derived from collective bargaining successes but there were also some positive management policies to encourage joint regulation. The authority extended well beyond day-to-day operational concerns and far into many strategic decisions. The staff and trade unions, and probably

the management as well, could not envisage that the enterprises would cease to function, or even diminish to any great extent. Supervisors had uncertain standing and their performance was unconvincing. Large sections of operational control were determined solely by staff and their representatives, on both an informal and formal basis. There was no shared sense of purpose about the enterprises and the employing relationships justified a pluralistic description. These circumstances can be described in the analytic framework as follows:

Diagram Six

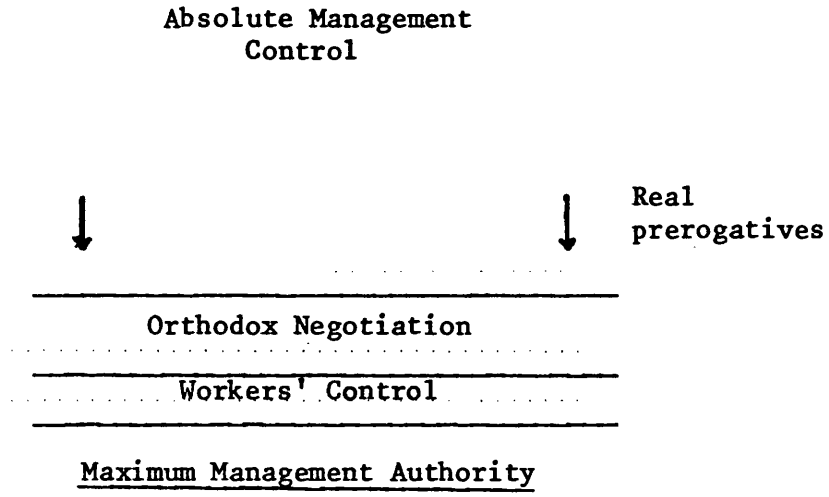


Compared with the 'standard' framework (Diagram Four), it is obvious that in this situation the area of absolute management control is very small and management exercises neither real nor as if prerogatives. All of the negotiating potential has been placed or brought into the orthodox negotiation arena but there are still pressures to expand it.

The response was for new management to declare that they were prepared to see the enterprise, or large parts of it, cease to function

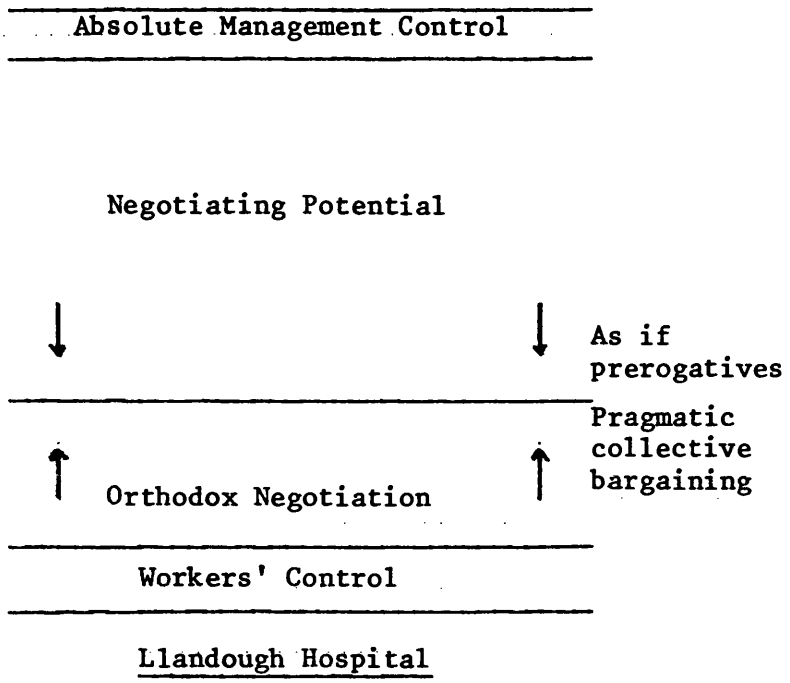
unless absolute and wide-ranging control was returned to management. Much tighter supervision was introduced which considerably reduced but not totally eliminated absolute control previously exercised by workers and their representatives. Orthodox negotiation still exists but about a much smaller range of issues than previously and within a range dictated by management. This it achieves by exercising real prerogatives i.e. it is perceived to be genuine when it threatens to close the enterprise or important locations of the enterprise unless substantial restrictions are adhered to. Workers have largely conformed with these expectations and in doing so they implicitly state that they have a common purpose with the management, which is the existence and success of the enterprise, and are prepared to tolerate, and possibly even co-operate with, management's endeavours to attain it. During periods of transition the nature of the employing relationship will be extremely confused but in periods of stability this acceptance of the management parameters also indicates acceptance of a unitary frame. It can be represented thus:

Diagram Seven



From the original research data, the employing relationship in Llandough Hospital would appear to be the following:

Diagram Eight



Absolute management control is small, but does exist and takes different forms at different levels of the enterprise. Ultimately, the government could decide to finance and manage health services privately; the health authority could close the hospital or allow it to stagnate or run down; and the work of certain departments could be considered for privatisation. The degree of informal control by the staff will vary a lot but is generally small. Orthodox negotiation exists across a fairly wide range of issues but these are mainly restricted to certain aspects of operational management, although the largely unstructured nature of the collective bargaining means that there are pragmatic pressures to enlarge the orthodox negotiation arena. By far the greatest part of control in the enterprise could become subject to orthodox negotiation if the staff and their representatives wanted it to and the management allowed it to, without the viability of the enterprise being eliminated, but in practice it

remains within the orb of management. One way in which this control is maintained is by the exercise of as if prerogatives but since both these prerogatives and the pressures of pragmatic collective bargaining exist and are in opposite directions there will be industrial relations tensions when either or both are tested, either deliberately or by miscalculation.

Participation and the Industrial Relations System

Reference has been made to some of the ambitious aspirations for participation expounded by those for whom it is a central preoccupation. Some indication of the degree to which such participatory evangelism is justified may have already been conveyed by the research data and the presentation of the proposed industrial relations analytic framework, but the relationship of participation to the industrial relations system generally and its place in contributing to the dynamic of the system can be further elaborated.

One of the greatest inadequacies of participatory exaltation is that it may encourage assessment of existing participatory practices as one of the first stages of enhancing participation (e.g. Industrial Participation Association 1979) but rarely, if ever, prompts introspection of the character of the industrial relations system or employing relationship. This area of enquiry has been included in the research and will be shown to be crucial in attempting to predict the potential for participation. Indeed, another theme of the evidence in the Llandough data was the almost peripheral location allocated to participation in the industrial relations system. The representatives had either no awareness of the concept or the little knowledge that

they had did not lead them to expect that it would have much impact on the way that industrial relations operated in the hospital.

This disparity with participation specialists is backed by commentators on industrial relations generally and industrial relations in the NHS in particular. In one major textbook (Clegg 1979), for example, only thirteen pages out of eleven chapters and four hundred and fifty six pages refer to participation in any detail and six of these relate almost exclusively to a review of the Bullock Report. Macfarlane (1981:138-40) considers the incidence and causes of strikes in the Health Service but inadequate participatory arrangements are not mentioned at all and neither do they feature in his tentative recommendations for improving NHS industrial relations. A report of over two hundred and fifty pages on precisely this topic, by the TUC Health Services Committee (1981), refers to arrangements that might be generously interpreted to be participation in only four pages. In a lengthy article in The Health Services (23.7.82.) the secretary of the TUC Health Services Committee, a former industrial relations adviser to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, and the Secretary General of the Rcn discussed the faults and remedies of NHS industrial relations but participation is not mentioned at all. Even ACAS in its evidence to the NHS Royal Commission (1978) devoted only two paragraphs to participation, one on informal departmental meetings and another on information bulletins to staff.

And if placing participation in perspective by considering the attention it receives within industrial relations systems is not salutary enough, comparison of its significance with examples of other industrial relations issues is overwhelming. There are all the

aspects of pay negotiation, such as incremental increases, relativities and bonuses; closed shop facilities; compulsory trade union ballots; redundancies; closure of employing locations; grievances; disciplinary action; and so on. In addition to most of the feature that apply generally the NHS experiences industrial relations trauma because of characteristics peculiar to itself. These include competitive tendering; central directives to reduce staffing levels; requirements to fund developments by cost improvements elsewhere in the service; extremely complicated terms and conditions of service; the emotional involvement of the community; and sensitivities to manifestations of hierarchical and class structures.

It also needs to be recognised that if the existing industrial relations character is inadequately considered there will be a failure to properly contemplate the consequences that increased participation might have upon the existing arrangements. Even when regard is shown for the wider industrial relations implications it is often by anticipating that improved industrial relations and greater harmony and unity of effort will be achieved. Participation may thus be regarded as a means of manipulation but what is often forgotten is that it can also be a thing to be manipulated. In essence, participation cannot be immune from the influences of the existing patterns of power.

Purcell and Smith (1979:23) believe that there is a stability in this pattern:

> "it is clear that workers and managers are capable of recognising a balance of power on industrial relations issues within organisations, and of achieving systems of reciprocal influence to share control.",

but reports in the media clearly show that this is not true and Clarke (1980:11) is more realistic.

> "From a practival viewpoint, it seems likely that disclosure of more information will add to the bargaining strength of the unions, thereby changing to some extent the balance of power in negotiations. There may be some loss of managerial authority in the sense that the element of mystique in possession of information has hitherto favoured compliance.".

Hawkins (1979:161) confirms that:

> "In other words, any change in the scope and style of collective bargaining may involve a change in the balance of power between the parties concerned.".

The practical consequences are identified by Clarke (1980:12):

> "The arguments in favour of a single channel for labour-management relations, the extension of the area of collective bargaining and the erosion of traditional managerial prerogatives all raise questions about the extent of participation by workers in the wide range of decisions which have to be taken in the enterprise, outside the customary area of negotiation, both in relation to production and daily life of the enterprise and in respect of its longer-term policies. When management considers that a certain course of action is necessary for the good of the business, and workers object, whose will is to prevail?".

Even relatively minor manifestations of participation can involved procedural changes, any of which may disturb the existing pattern of industrial relations:

> "Whether it is a matter of establishing joint procedures where none previously existed, or of formalising custom and practice, management must recognise that in some way the structure of power and authority will change." (Hawkins 1979:173).

A number of the Llandough representatives were quite blatant about their intentions to exploit any management-initiated change, whether procedural or not, to their own advantage and in some circumstances, therefore, participation may be a very attractive vehicle for this purpose. However, there still seems to be a prominent vein of thought that management can contain negotiation within its collective

bargaining arrangements and then declare that the issues to be discussed under the participative arrangements will still lie within management's control but in exercising that control management will attempt to be more sensitive to the views of the staff. In effect, this is doing exactly what Douglas (1957:79) warned against because not only might management have difficulty in sustaining the distinction between negotiation and participation but also staff will not perceive formally-declared limits to negotiation to be the real ones and will interpret them as cues in negotiating what is negotiable.

Neither is the extension of collective bargaining necessarily an extension of participation. A report in the Sunday Times (27.6.82.) referred to the frustration and impatience of the Government and the management of British Rail caused by the inability to achieve important management objectives through the elaborate procedures for obtaining agreement with staff. "Every issue, even minor ones, has to be agreed jointly with the unions at three different levels." (p 13). Joint regulation was deeply entrenched and had possibly worked to the benefit of both parties for some years but the point had been reached where the absence of agreement threatened to inflict serious mutual damage. The railwaymen were determined to strike, despite the knowledge that some of them would lose their jobs as a consequence and that a very substantial part of the railway system could even be closed down permanently. The extension of collective bargaining into joint regulation may therefore be incompatible with the viability of the enterprise and Hyman (1977:96) highlights that it may also be incompatible with workers' objectives:

> "The idea that collective bargaining replaces managerial control by industrial democracy must .... be rejected. Management still

> commands; workers are still obliged to obey. Trade unionism permits debate around the terms of workers' obedience; it does not challenge the fact of their subordination. 'Joint regulation' is *not* joint management" (1977:96).

This is true to the extent that management can ultimately decide whether or not the enterprise continues but up to the point of being forced to consider this decision management may have very little ability to impose its own agenda.

> There can be agreement, however, that:
>
> "The bitterness which can result when interests diverge like this shows that participation, far from being a means for burying conflict, may even exacerbate it." (Ramsay 1976b:696).

The ILO (1981:199) has recognised this possibility and advises modifying participation accordingly:

> "There is now some movement away from the idea of participation seen as collaboration between workers' and management representataives on non-controversial subjects towards the idea of participation in dealing with conflict situations, most often involving bargaining in the broad sense of the term, whether formal or informal.".

Failure to do this and perpetuation of the participating crusade designed to increase harmony of purpose may be both unproductive and counter-productive:

> "Efforts to suppress specific manifestations of conflict, *without removing the underlying causes of unrest*, may merely divert disorder into different channels." (Hyman 1975:188,189).

The ILO concludes (1981:201):

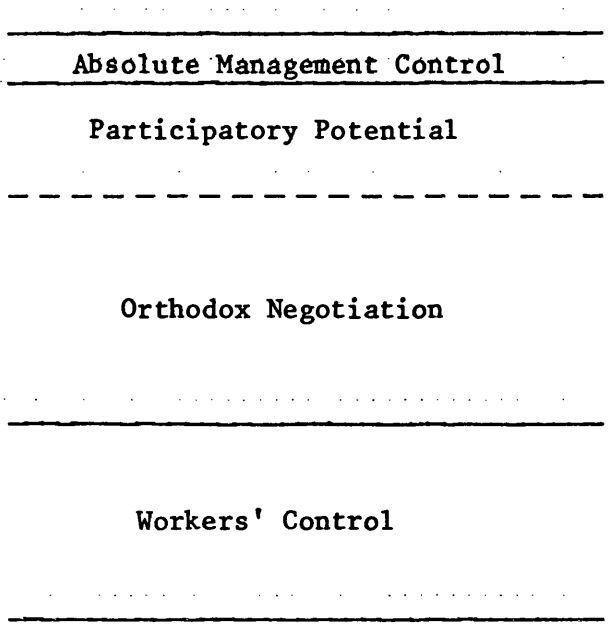
> "A growing number of writers are indeed tending to advocate the establishment of an integrated network of participation bodies to correspond to the various processes and levels of decision, since a single type of institutional machinery can no longer, on its own, meet the whole range of participation needs. In addition, it seems that the practical application of participation in its different forms benefits from clear recognition of the existence not only of common interests, but also of divergent interests which must be satisfied as fully as possible, always bearing in mind that in the medium and long terms the parties are in many respects interdependent in the undertaking.".

This guidance is properly sensitive to the true complexity of the interrelation between participation and industrial relations generally but it could be argued that it merely states that participation should be all things to all men. This is not the case, as the analytic framework can demonstrate.

The Potential for Participation

Participatory potential can be included as another stratum in the structural analysis and in a way that clearly shows how it can be successful for both management and staff, or either one or the other, how it can be unsuccessful, and how it can either diminish or magnify conflict. The strata must inevitably sit between orthodox negotiation and negotiating potential or absolute management control. Again, the extreme situations provide the simplest examples. If participation is introduced when all or most of the negotiating potential has been absorbed into orthodox negotiation it can be expected that management will attempt to introduce the participatory potential into the top of the orthodox negotiation stratum. Since management is virtually at the point of exercising real prerogatives it has negligible ability to concede the element of negotiation that will undoubtedly accompany any participative arrangements. Such participation is likely to be unsuccessful and provides the explanation for the typical situation where trade unions prefer to continue to use collective bargaining rather than participation to advance their members' interests. The composition of the framework will therefore be as follows:

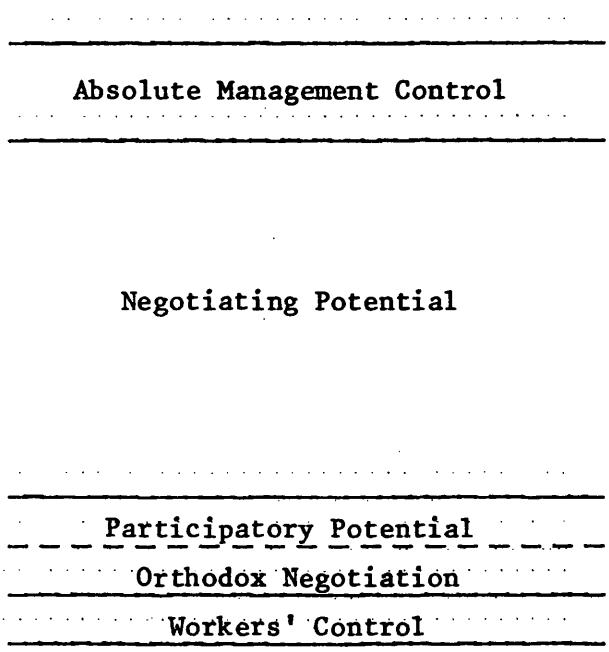
Diagram Nine



The Potential for Participation with Maximum Trade Union Authority

At another extreme, management may be successfully maintaining control over a substantial area of negotiating potential and be unwilling, rather than unable, to concede any of its authority, in which case management is again seeking to obtain participatory potential from the orthodox negotiation stratum and once again this is likely to be unsuccessful. The framework for this situation would be:

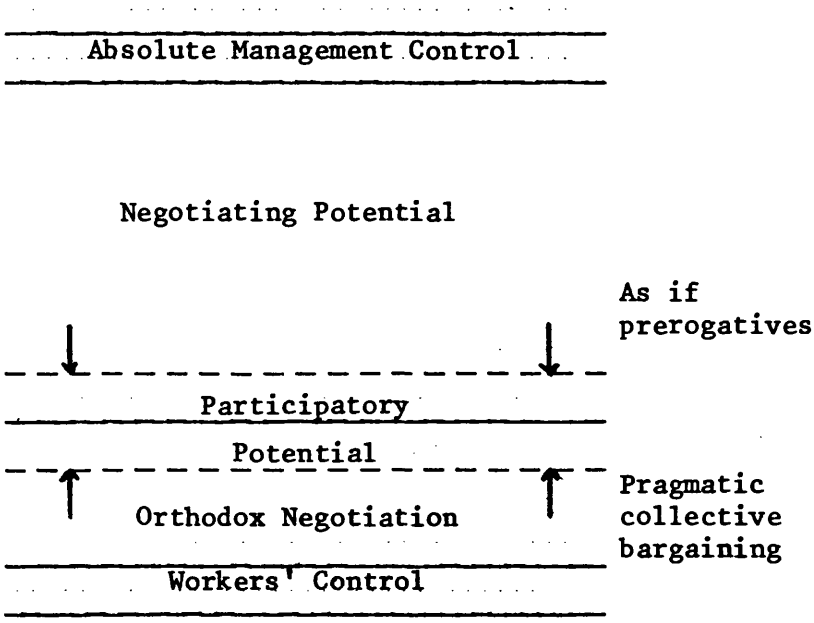
Diagram Ten



The Potential for Participation with Maximum Management Authority

The only participation that be of genuine value to both management and staff and which can accommodate both common and conflicting interests is that which derives from a stratum which is either entirely within the negotiating potential but adjacent to orthodox negotiation or straddles the distinction between the two and has different aspects in both strata. This analysis derives from, and is particularly appropriate for, the employing relationship at Llandough Hospital and the following diagram illustrates the straddling stratum of participatory potential in that context.

Diagram Eleven



The Location of Genuine Potential for Participation

Much of this thesis has concentrated on the relationship between participation and negotiation, partly because it has received inadequate attention in previous research and largely because it was an association of real vitality to the Llandough representatives, but it would be erroneous to give the impression that all participation is inevitably transformed into negotiation. The point being made is that it is unrealistic to believe that none of the content of participation will

become subject to negotiation. Attempts to implement arrangements founded on such a belief will be unsuccessful and may only enhance the frustration of staff and their desire for extended negotiated control. Much of participation may not affect the structure of control and influence but for it to be successful management must accept that ultimately some of the negotiating potential over which it exercises control may become subject to joint control. Conversely, however, if the staff see that this advantage may be obtained they may be willing to procedurally redefine the processes by which they exercise influence over the subjects already governed by orthodox negotiation.

The research data emphasised the importance of the management style in maintaining the limits of the negotiating potential while making management's absolute control tolerable to staff and that similarly the staff wished management to accommodate their attitudes and opinions but had no intention of challenging the system of control. They are essentially concerned with the defence of their interests operationally and not the attrition of control in principle. Their attention is therefore at the margin of management control only, or, in terms of the analytic framework, is concerned with the interface of the negotiating potential and orthodox negotiation strata. This is why participation may be one of the most sensitive indicators of the nature of the industrial relations processes that are active or even just latent. But if the negotiating potential is large, management can tolerate and even encourage expansion of orthodox negotiation, which both gives the impression of increasing the power and involvement of the staff and also reaffirms its prerogative, since it is clear that it is its control to dispense with. In the same way, by obtaining increased participation in these circumstances, trade unions can

increase the size of the negotiating stratum while not appearing to challenge management control. Participation is thus identified as one of the most crucial tools of negotiation of the employment relationship.

Conclusion

Management can seek to establish that it is the sole source of control, that it exercises absolute management prerogatives, by simply stating its claim or even by attempting to act in accordance with it, but this does not necessarily ensure acceptance of the claim by the staff. The staff may ignore it and the management may then be unable to cope with the challenges to its authority and amid highly traumatic conflict some will be lost, in part or even almost entirely. Even if management's claim to control absolutely is tolerated, there maybe little rapport between the management and staff, staff may keep knowledge and advice useful to management to themselves, there will be little loyalty to the enterprise or to management, and there will be little goodwill, which may be operationally essential at times.

Similarly, uncertain or pragmatic management may constantly compromise with staff about issues they raise or often concede completely and they thus allow the trade unions to take the initiative until the point is reached where the future of the employing enterprise is in jeopardy. It may be too late by then to reverse the relationship, because the expectations of the staff have become understandably fixed by the way that they have been allowed to be sustained over many years, or once again alteration in the relationship may be sought but only at the cost of fundamental and enormously damaging confrontation.

However, if management retains a sense of purpose and a sense of proportion about the identity of the key features of the employing relationship, it can exercise freedom in its day-to-day contact with staff, both in the types of issues concerned and the way in which they are handled. This implies that the meaning of the word participation can operate at two quite distinct levels. It has a broader sense that refers to a type of management outlook, one which is prepared to take chances, to allow flexibility and some negotiation and compromise, to learn from staff, and to manifest this in both process and structure, such as by informal contact, joint consultative committees, quality circles and collective bargaining. The second meaning of participation is to describe the specific methods used and the important distinction is that even when participation in the second sense exists it does not necessarily follow that participation exists in the first sense. But possessing a management outlook that encompasses the more broadly defined participation is more demanding upon management since it may reflect abdication of its function unless it retains an awareness of the parameters within which enhanced freedom will not jeopardise the purpose of the organisation, and to do this it must exercise as if prerogatives.

It therefore becomes possible to analyse employing organisations as consisting of a mass of management objectives, intentions and activities, the great majority of which staff are not concerned with (either because they are not allowed to or because they are not sufficiently interested or aware) and which staff have no desire to challenge. If this is the case, in dimensions of both time and activity there is de facto a unitary framework and as if prerogatives can be exercised. Nevertheless, within the parameters established by

management both pluralist and unitary analyses can apply but even the pluralist activities are rarely intended to use up management authority and will not, provided that management does not allow them to. This analysis does not seek to confirm or refute either the power-seeking and -denying or power-expanding models. Power remains the same but the concern is for the way it is manifest.

Participation becomes a considerable test of management's ability to handle ambiguity - to be in control and yet to appear to be willing to share some of it. This hints of paternalism but it can be contended that this is unfounded as such an approach encourages questioning, informality, common activities and recognition from management that it is prepared to be flexible and does not always have the correct, or any, answer.

The research design was true to this understanding of participation as a management philosophy. Since I was a manager inviting shop stewards and others to criticise management as irrationally, emotionally or fundamentally as they wished, it was possible that the research process would encourage an antagonism, not only within the research process but in the employing relationship generally, and that this might have had a traumatic and, to management at least, damaging effect upon industrial relations. Although this could have occurred I still had little hesitation in initiating the research, in perhaps what might be described as an action of faith regarding the honourability of my intentions, but which more realistically can be described as a demonstration of the confidence that I possessed as a representative of management about the ability to retain control. This should not

denigrate the integrity of the enquiry and it is surely apparent that the staff were encouraged to be as open and frank as possible about their perceptions of the pattern of industrial relations in the hospital and the place of participation in it. The quality of the data hopefully demonstrates this was successfully achieved but it also shows that although many criticisms, grievance and suggestions were forthcoming, the confidence in the authority of management was not only justified but also reaffirmed and reinforced. This was partly because the research process conveyed to the staff that a member of management had a genuine desire to perceive the world of industrial relations as they did and to consider how best their perceptions could be accommodated. There was thus an element of shared problem-solving about the exercise.

In addition, the research process was a practical catalyst and it contained elements of action research. Three years after the field research commenced, the nature of industrial relations in the hospital had experienced considerable metamorphosis. Relatively serious local disputes still occur but are resolved without recourse to industrial action. There are no impediments to informal consultation and there is frequent liaison initiated by both management and trade union representatives about an exceptionally wide range of issues, some of which are contentious or potentially contentious but are still largely resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, by a process of bargaining or negotiation. There have clearly been other influences upon the industrial relations climate, such as government policy, unemployment, competitive tendering, supervisory training and changes in personality among the staff and managers, but the impact of the research itself should not be underestimated.

It is impossible to prove, but I would advance that it had three major effects. It certainly altered my own understanding of industrial relations processes and the perceptions of staff and their representatives and probably, although largely unconsciously, accordingly changed the manner of exercising the management function. Secondly, the research process added new characteristics to the staff's image of management. I believe that it introduced an appreciation that management was sincere in its desire to achieve an improvement in industrial relations and there was also a sharing of pride in the research task. The staff seemed to feel they had become significant in a wider context and were very directly contributing to insight that would have value to industrial relations generally. Finally, the research provided the opportunity to make a co-operative endeavour out of analysing conflict. At the same time as discussing some of the most sensitive and powerful distinctions between management and staff a unity of purpose was developed that was a form of participation and which undoubtedly impacted upon the industrial relations environment in the hospital generally.

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